Glad Ray

by

CLARA PALMER GOETZINGER



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TO THE LOVE CHILDREN OF THE WORLD

GOD alone creates. You are born in HIS Image and Likeness. There is but one Creator, the Father of us all, and His Infinite Love eternally shields and sustains you. No man-made law can rob you of your Divine Heritage of Peace, Happiness and Prosperity. No human opinion can change the Directorship and Justice of God.

GLAD RAY, a Child of Love, blessed with beauty, grace and intelligence, but damned by bestial mortals, men who prey and women who murder, condemned under the present day code to shame, disgrace, and spiritual oblivion, through suffering comes into the great understanding of her birthright and masters a sordid world.

This message of Hope comes from the inspired pen of a Woman who understands. It's soothing Truth will heal the aching heart of many mothers. This book is given to the world with the full understanding of the wave of denunciation which always follows the appearance of a fearless Truth. But Glad Ray, like all who claim the inheritance, *"In the Image and Likeness of God,"* will live through Eternity, cheering, blessing and uplifting all mankind.

THE PUBLISHERS.

GLAD RAY

CHAPTER I.

SHE was five feet four inches and weighed one hundred and ten pounds. Though delicately slender, every movement was graceful and suggested a sensitive, clinging, innocent nature which knew neither coquetry nor the feminine embellishment of powder and rouge. Her eyes were deep violet-blue shaded by long, silken, bronze-brown lashes. The flesh of her fair body was like the velvet petals deep in the heart of a pale, pink, Kilarney rose. Her mouth was alluringly soft and full, but not in the least sensuous. A wealth of wavy light brown hair with glints of bronze framed her perfectly chiseled features and accentuated the picture of trusting, loving young womanhood rigidly schooled in domestic obedience and puritanical decorum. Slender hands were indicative of a long line of proud Southern ancestors whose touch was both delicate and talented. Her shapely feet tread lightly and becomingly in minuet or graceful bearing. Born of a loving, religious mother and stalwart lawyer-father, Gladys Longworth had been reared under the discipline of unvarying southern traditions and strictest denominational doctrines.

Following the death of Colonel Marcus Lloyd Longworth, his widow, Mrs. Elizabeth Lee Longworth, and her beautiful daughter, Gladys, continued to live on the edge of town in the old colonial family mansion located in the center of a sixty acre estate, landscaped with rose gardens, hollyhock hedges, peony bushes, arbutus and honeysuckle runners, grape arbors, bushes of lilac, syringa and elderberry.

During her mother's heroic financial struggle, Gladys had come in closer contact with the opposite sex than either parent ever had permitted during more prosperous days. However, the chaperonage of the widowed mother created an atmosphere of culture at the Longworth mansion, and the few priviliged to live there appreciated the charm and dignity of these two Southern gentlewomen. An old negro gardner, Samuel, and his wife, Dora, had remained faithful to the memory of their master, the Colonel, keeping up the attractive appearance of the Longworth estate, and serving the household whenever their outside labors permitted. The wages were small, but like many of the colored servants remaining from childhood to old age in the service of the genuine Southern aristocracy, Samuel and Dora knew no other home and loved their mistress and "Mis' Gladis" with slavish loyalty.

During his matriculation at the Louisville Medical College, Raymond Hallaway made his home with the Longworths, partaking of the delicious meals prepared by Dora, enjoying the use of the late Colonel's extensive library, and sharing the inspiring privileges of the splendid estate. Living so long under the same roof

it was but natural, in their quest for companionship, that the physician-to-be should find himself frequently in the presence of Gladys. Both young people were more than congenial,—their dispositions, accomplishments and ambitions so much in accord that they found themselves gradually but positively drawn into the maelstrom of love.

Early in his senior year, Hallaway made no pretense of hiding his affections for the beautiful Kentucky girl who, unaccustomed to the ardorus attentions of men, at first met his advances with charming timidity. Later, his persistency won the girl's love which she bestowed with a devotion and faith unquestioned in its sincerity. They were not in a position to marry, yet the desire for possession—to be one, was maddeningly irresistible. Reason itself was temporarily dethroned. In their blind, passionate love everything was forgotten—duty to themselves, to their relatives and to society. Nothing seemed worth while in life unless it was related to the superb emotion as they conceived it. To them, their understanding of love was all-sufficient. In declaring his undying devotion and asking Gladys to become his wife, Raymond frankly explained that for certain family reasons their marriage could not take place for several months, possibly years. Yet he had made his plea so sincere and convincing that her faith had remained unshaken. Evening after evening, following a whispered exchange of hopes and confidences, and the good night kiss, Gladys would retire to her room and meditate, wondering why it was necessary for mere words from a third person to make

them husband and wife. She secretly felt no minister could unite them more sacredly than their own holy love, as she conceived it, already had done. Gladys Longworth quietly laughed at man-made laws, because of her inability to discriminate between them and the Divine Laws of Creation. Hers was more of an emotional, impulsive love than an affection based on the even balance of discretion and endless loyalty. So puritanically guarded from the necessary truths and texts which empty sentiment pronounces unfit for the knowledge of young women, a nature like Gladys Longworth's invariably confuses the varied strata of sex affection, and frequently embraces momentary passion believing it to be the sublime emotion of enduring and unselfish love.

Gradually the unreasonable admonitions of Mrs. Longworth, and her tactless, insistent manner of compelling her daughter's recognition of the family's narrow religious beliefs, had antagonized Gladys until the latter determined there was no form of compromise; that the Lees and Longworths held obsolete views which were absolutely inapplicable to modern society. It was not until years later she discovered through bitter experience that to COMPLY with and thus PROVE RESPECT for necessary civic laws is to EXEMPLIFY regard for Divine Laws.

One quiet moonlight evening, after Raymond had finished his studies for the following day, he and Gladys leisurely strolled about the rose gardens and seated themselves under the protecting cover of the honeysuckle arbor.

"Raymond, do you think it is wicked," queried Gladys, "as mother insists it is, to believe less in the power of man than in the convictions of your own soul?"

"No, dear," Raymond responded, "I don't. No man can think for us. Yet, every man has the same right to his views as you or I, and we must respect the rights of others."

"I didn't mean it that way;" she parried, "I intended to convey that no man-made law can unite us any closer than we are now,—not in Spiritual reality."

"You are right as far as Spiritual reality is concerned;" Raymond argued, "but we must respect the rights and demands of those about us,—at least to a degree."

"I'm so weary of poor mother's conception of social laws and a body-guard for every move I make." Gladys sighed as her lover drew her beautiful form closer.

"She's a noble little mother, at that, dear," he whispered.

"Of course, she is; but—"

"In many ways," interposed Raymond, "she is narrow, and has kept the needed truths from you, while at the same time she has thumped a perpetual tattoo on religious matters. However, mothers are alike the world over. They always mean well, though only a few of them change their personal views with time. She means to do her religious duty as she sees it."

"It's a wonder she doesn't demand that I wear hoop

skirts and bustle because Grandmothers Lee and Longworth wore them."

The lovers laughed. Raymond kissed the alluring lips as she pursed them for the pretended need of consolation.

"My darling, does any other human count in the Presence of the Sacrament of our Immortal Love?" he pleaded.

"No, Raymond," she admitted.

"Are the man-made laws of church or state greater than the laws of the Creator?"

"Never, dear," she trustingly answered.

"Though we respect their views, nothing anyone can say or do will add to or take from this perfect love of ours. Is it forever and ever we promise to love, cherish and aid each other in sickness and in health, to bear and forbear, to assist or resist as the instance may require? Is it to be forever and ever, my darling?"

"Forever and ever, Raymond."

Like an evil omen, came a sudden crash on the brick terrace beneath the portico not far from the honeysuckle arbor. Gladys screamed with terror. Raymond immediately investigated and found plaster fragments of an ear broken from one of the two faun's heads which served as ornamental guards on either side of the drive near the main entrance.

"Nothing at all, dear," he assured his sweetheart, "but the crumbling evidence of age. The north faun refused to retain one of its ears any longer. Samuel will discover the pieces in the morning."

"Is *that* all; and I so frightened. On the still night

air, and from out of the darkness, it sounded like a ghostly warning"

"Don't let it worry you, darling," he lovingly counseled. "Let me see,—just what were you promising? Oh, yes, you were saying how long you would love me and promise to be mine. Will you repeat it once more, my own?"

"Forever and ever, Raymond."

"How wonderful to hear you promise those comforting truths. Some day, when I can dwell on sordid things, I'll tell you a little of the misery I made for myself in my youth; how I broke my poor old mother's heart; but when those memories weigh me down, know that your reassuring words of love for me, and your faith in my promises, give me the greatest kind of encouragement."

For a few moments they remained in meditative silence as they crept a little closer and watched the grey fleecy clouds chasing one another before the face of the bright silver moon.

"Will you bear in mind, Gladys," continued Raymond analytically, "that before the ALL-Seeing, ALL Understanding God, you are my wife? You are morally my wife even before I am able to acknowledge to the world this fact, and pay a minister or Justice to satisfy the law. Even the marriage ceremony is a mere matter of obedience to social laws, and has no connection with the laws of our souls. Will you remember that?"

"Yes, dearest," she responded, fairly radiant with the joy that his views harmonized with her own, and

brought her above the pale of ordinary mortals in his estimation, at the same time augmenting her faith in his every word.

"Will you believe me, little wife-of-my-soul, that we are given to each other without resistance or false standards? I know what I want in this world,—it is you, dear. You are necessary to my success in life. I not only know you to be my wife, but I have pictured you the perfect and beautiful mother of the dream-child cherished in my secret heart as long as I have had ideals."

Gladys lowered her fringed lashes over her large blue eyes, and marveled at the courage of her lover to portray frankly his ultimate wishes in life.

"Raymond,—dearest,—I never knew men thought about the woman they chose for their life-mate in the light of motherhood too," Gladys confided.

"Many men don't," he answered, "but a few realize at some period or other that a noble woman is never so wonderful as when she becomes a mother. Gladys, darling, it is only natural that I, at the age other men generally begin their domestic lives, should at least hope and dream of a home, wife and children. I can scarcely wait until it is possible to make that home and support you,—the dearest little girl in all this universe."

"I am so proud you feel me worthy." Gladys cuddled closer to her lover. "But, personally, I feel a humble reticence about being a perfect or beautiful mother. Yet, I am happy you feel as you do. I never

dared speak to you about being your wife, in the sight of God, for fear you would think me presuming."

"Wonderful little girl! Hereafter, will you keep any of the great truths from me? Especially, will you promise always to confide in me concerning your hopes and ambitions?" His voice vibrated like soft, deep, melodious music.

"I will confide it all to you, providing I can find the words to express myself."

"If the ideal is a part of the perfect love of your soul, dearest, the words to express and the strength to live the ideal will be quite synonymous."

"Will you always look upon me as your wife?" she timidly asked him.

"Always, from now through all Eternity. Will you always look upon me as your husband? Tell me, Gladys."

"From this hour you are my husband."

"For how long?" he urged.

"For Eternity," she promised, sincerely meaning not to fail in her word of honor.

Leaving the garden in the tender embrace of night, the lovers parted with a fervent kiss.

Week after week, and month after month harmoniously passed in the Longworth household until one memorable, warm evening in May previous to Raymond Hallaway's graduation. He and Gladys were seated in the large double steamer chair on the wide veranda overlooking the gardens. The beauty of the first half of a Southern moon, thousands of twinkling

stars and picturesque surroundings caused the lovers to linger in peaceful silence. At last Gladys interrupted the symphony of blissful romance:—

"Raymond, dear, after dinner to-night, I promised mother not to remain up late. Entrancing as all this is, I must go to my room."

"The night is ideal, and you are more so. It is almost desecration to leave this perfect retreat." Raymond held her soft, warm hands within his as he gazed into the depths of her responsive eyes.

"You are so good to me, dear, and feed me so lavishly with love, that I, too, am reluctant to leave, but Raymond—"

"Stay just a little longer, darling. We never have had a more wonderful love-feast than this one to-night, —at least not since our perfect understanding."

"How sweet it sounds to hear you speak that way," she whispered.

"Does it, little girl? Are you happy we shall live together always? Just you and I,—husband and wife?"

"Sublimely happy, my wonderful doctor-man."

"Come then, my darling, grant me just one more kiss, and I will carry you to your room."

Softly, lovingly and tenderly, moved by a strange expectancy, Gladys offered her lips. Their good-night kiss became a rapturous tribute of sublime passion.

"Carry me now, before all this exquisite joy vanishes. Please carry me."

"My wonderful,—my precious love!"

"Yes, dear,—please carry me?"

"And place you like a baby in your little bed for the night?" His voice, low and vibrant, thrilled her enraptured soul.

"Yes, Raymond, my—my—"

"Say it, precious; call me just once the name you know."

"My husband; soul of my soul!"

"Such ecstasy,—oh, baby-wife!"

"You promised," coaxingly, "so take me in your great strong arms, and carry me to my little white bed."

"I will, my beloved."

Raymond joyously complied, nestling his lips for an instant against her warm white throat. Lightly and easily, he carried her into the house, up the main stairway, entering his sweetheart's room, tenderly placing his precious burden on the snow-white bed. She pretended to be asleep, but a happy smile lingered about the corners of her soft, red lips. Raymond knelt beside her, kissing the closed eyelids and warm, slightly parted mouth. She roguishly peeped through quivering lashes, and they both laughed at her innocent subterfuge.

"One more kiss, my precious, and I will leave you for the night."

After Gladys granted the lingering caress, her impetuous lover started abruptly toward the door.

"Give back the kiss I gave you," she coaxed.

"I must go, blessed baby-wife-of-my-heart. I dare not remain a moment longer."

Gladys half raised herself on her elbow, astounded at the glorious happiness she experienced.

"Raymond, please don't go,—not yet."

"Good-night, darling." His words belied his desires, as he returned for one more caress.

"Husband! Mine! Stay here, and love me just a little more."

"I yearn to, but dare not. Great God, but I love you!"

"Then kiss me again, Raymond," she pleaded.

"Sweetheart! Can't you understand it is almost impossible to restrain my adoration for you? Please don't coax me again. This is all-sublime in its perfectness."

"Come! Come!" she repeated, her voice alluringly modulated.

"Gladys,—why shouldn't I? It is the call and union of our souls. YOU ARE MINE! MY BELOVED! MY WIFE!"

"Raymond! MY LOVE! MINE!"

Again bending over the fascinating vision before him, he whispered with rapture and passion:

"I WORSHIP YOU! I WORSHIP YOU!"

CHAPTER II.

FOR a long time the dream of Gladys Longworth and Raymond Hallaway remained serene and undisturbed; but folly's inevitable spectre forced its presence upon these two as it does on all who toy with the ethics of moral law. Their romance was abruptly shattered, the cost appalling, the future mercilessly bleak with its social ostracism and physical and mental anguish.

Gladys kept their secret not only from her associates but particularly her mother. Through fear and despair this had been her lover's command. At last, driven into a mingled state of despondency and shame over the continued postponement of their marriage, Gladys reluctantly consented to rent secluded quarters in a nearby town until after the birth of their child. Hallaway was devotion itself to the expectant mother; but every time she pleaded with him to marry, he would upbraid her for lack of trust. He even humiliated the heartbroken girl by informing her it was not becoming for a gentlewoman to beg the hand of her lover in marriage,—all this to silence Gladys and pacify his own conscience.

Mrs. Longworth trustingly believed her daughter, while away from home, was visiting former Art School chums . Gladys wrote interesting weekly letters. She

described brilliant, but imaginary functions she had attended, and delayed her return because of delightful fetes which, she wrote, "would be a social misfortune to miss."

Mrs. Longworth, full of unselfishness and pride in what she believed to be her daughter's social success, encouraged the visit by sending small checks, denying herself many necessities. Not the least of the mother's sacrifices was doing much of her own housework with the assistance of Dora. Her home consisted of eighteen rooms, most of them rented to students, and the absence of Gladys for several months laid a heavy burden on the aged woman.

As the months preceding the birth of the babe lessened to weeks, and the weeks to days, Gladys became more and more determined to have a final understanding and see if there could be any logical reason why the father of her unborn child should not be forced to share the disgrace which he had so impulsively cast over her life. She was willing to bear the cross, but the burden alone seemed too heavy for single punishment. Hallaway's promises seemed forgotten.

Visions of her child's future; the horror of being without a legal protector in the face of public scorn; the stigma of social shame forced upon the babe; the natural curiosity of the young mind as maturer years approached,—such dreams became more and more intolerable. The thought that her son or daughter might forever miss the powerful influence of a legal father's guiding hand, was just one of a thousand horrors which confronted the expectant mother. Again and

again the most unmentionable pictures presented themselves while she endured the last ten days of waiting.

As the days sped by she naturally shrank from the oft repeated humiliation of asking her lover to do his duty, only to hear the same torturing argument:—

"As soon, my dear, as I am graduated and established in some new town where neither of us has been known, and one other obstacle has been removed, I will marry you. We can take our child and return to my practice without any one being the wiser."

"But, why the delay?" she entreated. As your wife I could be with you and share the uncertainties and hardships."

"Gladys, for my sake be more reasonable," he countered. "Your condition is such that you are utterly devoid of reason and when this is over you are going to feel the absurdity of your present desires. You do not understand the utter impossibility of your demands."

A depressing expression spread over the features of the expectant mother as she dubiously lifted and lowered her shoulders.

"But, Raymond, dear,—"

"Have you forgotten," he interrupted, "our former promises, and especially that you would not question my silence nor doubt my honor?"

"No, I've not forgotten, but that was before—before —"

"Then in heaven's name let well enough alone!" he exclaimed. "Know that I am a man of my word. It will be my *privilege,* and not my duty, to marry you as soon as conditions are favorable. Trust me, dear,"

he continued, changing his exasperated tone to one of tenderness.

Gladys realized there must be a dreadfully serious reason why Raymond refused to marry her. She inwardly cringed at the thought of being considered unreasonable. She had heard mature ladies discourse concerning the peculiarities of delicate women, but the very thought of being considered eccentric was a reflection on the pride the prospective mother felt in her efforts to develop the future talents and shape the moral tendencies of her unborn child. Exhausted and fairly heartbroken, Gladys spent the last two days of waiting in the hospital registered as Mrs. R. G. Hall." Hallaway was referred to as 'Dr. Hall,' and posed as a decidedly devoted husband. The night of the birth he tried to assist the attending physician and nurse, but the pathetic agony of his loved one proved too much for Hallaway's nerve. Kneeling by her couch of pain, he assured Gladys again and again that some day he would convince her what such devotion and courage meant. He kissed her eyes, hair and feverish lips, leaving tears, of which he was not ashamed, upon the pale cheek as he whispered: "Bravest of little mothers." Gladys was too weak to doubt his expressions of loving sympathy. They gave comfort to her aching heart. She smiled with maternal pride as she watched her lover hold the baby girl protectingly against his breast, and heard him say: "Our baby, dear—just ours."

Two weeks passed and at last came the hour when Raymond Hallaway was to take his baby and Gladys

back to the latter's modest room. His selfishness and dual life had not forced their weight upon him. The only thing which appeared to torture Hallaway was the living proof of his lack of foresight and moral stamina. If Gladys so chose, the gossip-loving world would soon gloat over his misfortunes, and sneer with mocking contempt at his personal reasons for keeping secret the realization of his most sacred dream. Hallaway had desired the child with all his heart and was proud of her, but he did not wish the world to know of her until he was able to provide proper protection. She was the child of his ideals. She was conceived at the height of his reclaimed health, ambition, and vital energy. Not until Hallaway drove slowly along, with Gladys beside him holding the baby, was there profound regret concerning the little one's birth. It was the weakening attitude of the young mother which caused the forebodings. During most of the drive there was comparative silence, both realizing too late their appalling responsibility.

No one is so free of short-comings that at one time or another he or she is not secretly gratified when some family tradition or condition offers excuse for mistakes. So it was with Hallaway, who took refuge in the asurance that the Longworths always had been a proud family of Revolutionary fame. Indeed, they were so very proud that nothing ever was revealed concerning their domestic life—the military events comprising the most important epochs, periods conspicuous with straps, spurs, bayonets and heroes. Each generation learned of its predecessor's worthy achieve-

ments, and diplomatically refrained from revealing domestic difficulties, as the bravery of their men and the nobility of their women, during the great battles, gave the "House of Longworth" just reason to feel proud of its share in Southern glory. If domestic conflicts crossed swords with the military forces, they were silenced by the Longworth pride, and eventually crushed under the laurels of patriotic honors.

Raymond Hallaway believed if Mrs. Longworth ever heard of her daughter's misfortune, she would use every effort to silence the report. In this he failed to consider the proud spirit of indignation and sense of justice which permeates those crushed by sudden misfortune. Only death can prevent a normal Southern man or woman from fighting for family honor,—and even then posterity clings to the right of protecting its dead, and eagerly takes up the unfinished labors of keeping the good old name free from public ridicule.

Gladys yearned to return home to her mother, but Raymond pleaded with her to postpone the ordeal, or place the infant in some institution until such time as they could be married. Either of these suggestions drove the lonely girl almost frantic as it had always been her real nature to live above reproach and to be especially loyal to Mrs. Longworth. Continuing such deception was most revolting.

Every week Raymond's father, who lived in a small town in Ohio where he was engaged in the drug business, sent his son a small allowance. When this sum was divided between Gladys and Hallaway, it proved little more than a starvation income and extras for the

child were obtained only through extreme sacrifice on the new mother's part. It was not long before both parents realized the wants of their babe were imperative. The little one needed warmer clothing and more nourishing food. When taken for its daily airing and other roomers stopped to admire the infant's soulful, brown eyes, they shivered at the sight of its fragile body. Gladys fully understood that it was her own mode of living which was having a detrimental effect on the baby. If permitted to return to her mother and unburden her mind, she knew her former appetite would return. She realized worry had made the infant peevish during the day and sleepless at night and knew drugs given to babes simply to induce sleep occasionally result in idiocy and murder.

The new mother hesitated in permitting her student-lover to continue treating the little one, though it was evident that Hallaway was sincere in his desire to give the best of his limited knowledge. Every change in treatment or suggestion caused the mother-heart silently to yearn for the consultation of a more experienced physician. However, Hallaway removed all doubts of his love for the baby by his frank devotion. So far as his fear of publicity permitted, and his limited means allowed, he gradually manifested the joys and responsibilities of fatherhood, displaying far greater concern over the infant's welfare than that of Gladys.

Hallaway spent Saturday and Sunday of every week with Gladys and their baby, but from Monday morning until Friday evening he remained in Louisville attend-

ing College during the day and at night occupying his room at the home of Mrs. Longworth, facing that proud woman with well-concealed fear and smoothly-spoken untruths. One Wednesday night, while he was studying, Mrs. Longworth became exceedingly ill of what later proved to be plural pneumonia. For several days previous she had suffered from a severe cold, but this particular night she experienced unusual pain and high fever. She sent a servant to Hallaway with instructions to come to her immediately.

The moment he entered the sick woman's chamber, gazed upon her haggard face, and felt her faint pulse, Hallaway knew she had only the slightest chance of recovery. Mrs. Longworth could hardly speak as she feebly dictated a telegram to Gladys, urging her to return. Hallaway's hour of deepest humiliation had at last arrived. He would not only be forced to make his life an open book to Gladys, but face the contempt and scorn of her mother. Only too well he realized if her daughter were not home within four hours—that Mrs. Longworth would order the colored servant, Dora, to send a second message, and then the entire affair would surely become public. Under the latter conditions, Gladys would bring the baby home with her without consulting him.

The only solution Raymond could possibly conceive was to personally go to his sweetheart instead of wiring, and tell her about her mother's serious illness. He would say news of the child might kill the patient. He intended to plead once more with Gladys to leave the baby in the care of the landlady. Hallaway left Louis-

ville on the 2:10 A. M. train, a short time after Mrs. Longworth had given him the message to wire. Gladys would neither listen to his pleading, nor voice her future intention. She was determined not to permit the child to be absent from her sight one minute, and absolutely refused to consider further deceiving Mrs. Longworth.

Before the birth the young mother had been too delicate for strong decision. She had made but a half-hearted effort to believe in the arguments her lover advanced. Little by little she came to the conclusion that most of his excuses were based on fear. Since her present existence was such a pathetic reality, and the future a dark cheerless uncertainty, Gladys intended, as health returned, either to force a marriage or compel him to divulge the reason why he continually dodged the issue. All her life she had believed in the raw coldness of unadulterated truth, indifferent to whether or not it injured her nearest and dearest. This was Longworth logic, and a tradition instilled in Gladys from infancy. If moved to speak, she must utter the truth without relation to consideration, kindliness, protection, diplomacy or silence;—truth regardless of consequences.

Raymond voiced his strongest arguments. He saw education, happiness, realization of all his dreams,—everything at stake. It was wit against wit; will against will; and public humiliation against family pride. The man depended on the woman's broadness of spirit; her understanding of the marriage vows as he understood them; her promises in which he shared

equally; as well as a combined maternal and matehood affection to guide her impulses. Hallaway knew he could and WOULD carry out his part of their compact, but doubted more and more the capacity of his sweetheart. All he implored of her was silence for a few months. He dreaded the effect it would have on his love if Gladys persisted in exhibiting only contempt for his every assurance. It was Hallaway's sincere intention eventually to legalize the union, just as it was already a spiritual fact. He, also, possessed a type of pride not of family aristocracy, but a man-pride that the mistakes of *drunken youth* should not be disclosed for public ridicule; neither should he be crucified for the sacredness of his own ideals simply to justify the narrow Longworth traditions as interpreted by one equally narrow off-spring.

Gladys Longworth vizualized her life as that of a most unhappy and unfortunate mistress. The present was her only opportunity; and the future, as far as she could see, held nothing but bleak suffering. Her ambitions appeared to be dormant; vindictiveness held sway; while diplomacy fled.

Hallaway held the mother of his baby a thousand times closer than any legal ties could bind. Other men in like circumstances might have proven cads and libertines; but only love, ideals, and hope had prompted him. Irritable, sometimes brusque, he was afraid, if Gladys continued obstinate, it would cause him to harbor malice rather than affection. Raymond Hallaway had made many failures, but the one to crush him most was the realization he could not convince the woman he

loved that all promises would be kept sacredly and joyfully just the instant fate released him from unsolicited bondage. To be sure, he had refused to disclose to Gladys any details of his bondage or the bitter past. For this she had doubted him. Because of her doubt, Hallaway was beginning to wonder if the one great passion visited upon the truly mated—the combination of love, trust, ambition and happiness—was what he had dreamed it would be, after all.

It was a forceful awakening for the man to comprehend that an understanding, when it takes place amid conditions of devotion, passion, and the protection of the family roof, is only HIS version and assumes proportions of unreasonable retaliation on the part of the woman after she bears her lover a child, which the taunting, hypocritical, amening populace dares to brand as illegitimate. All the primitive instincts of the woman arise in defiance of social ostracism. She will sell the most sacred secrets of her chosen lover to convince her near-friends (the mighty judges, the pious, the sinless, the fire-brand carriers of the REAL cause of a woman's blackened name) that she can bring the father of her child to scorn,—to absolute subjection. For this she inwardly hates herself, but cries aloud with Christian cheats and murderers of their unborn—"JUSTICE."

So it was with Gladys,—at first she loved Raymond with a ravishing abandon, but after the birth she weighed her love by the atom. His actions mystified as responsibilities unfolded and her faith wavered as morbid fears for the baby increased. Raymond be-

came weary of her plea for justice and constant cry of doubt. They had their understanding, and now at the crucial test Gladys was faltering. She had promised not to question his silence, and in return he had given his word to protect her. Gladys, knowing nothing of her lover's earlier life, never dreamed of the impossibility of an immediate marriage. To her, it was a case of protection and social respectability for the child. She could see no legal reason why casual promises made before more serious events should stand in the path of the law. For a time after his arrival with her mother's urgent message, Raymond tried to convince Gladys that publicity might deprive him of graduation and of being able to support her. No arguments had the least influence on her. She hurriedly packed her few belongings, and with each article she placed in the suitcases her lips became more set.

"Gladys, in the name of heaven, listen to reason," he implored. "Spare the branding of our baby, even if you—"

"Stop," she shrieked. "You have harangued on this subject as long as I am going to listen. I am going home to mother, and my baby is going with me."

"Then the public will learn everything," he argued. "Silence for a few months is our only salvation. People do not gabble about something they never have known. I am supporting you the best I can for the present. Often I am in actual need that you and the little one may have extras. This is not said to brag for, God knows, you, too, have gone without many necessities. Soon it will not be required of you to

make a single sacrifice. Won't you be fair with me? Go to your mother, sweetheart, but leave the baby here."

"Never! She goes with me, and I am going home." Gladys gave one of the suitcases a bang.

"Very well, do as you please. Take the consequences. I have tried to open an easier avenue for all three of us, and you have set your Longworth jaw against every suggestion. I hope you will be better satisfied with your own efforts than you have been with mine. It's a rotten tradition which impels you to divulge the pitiless truth, when silence, decency and diplomacy would suffice."

In a frenzy of despair Hallaway picked up the two satchels and followed Gladys as she left her cheap abode with the baby clasped tightly against her breast.

CHAPTER III

THE return journey was uneventful. In less than four hours after Raymond Hallaway left Louisville, he was back with Gladys and their baby. Dora, the colored servant, opened the door of the Longworth home and stood aghast as the trio entered. Hallaway placed the satchels on the halltree, and took the sleeping infant from its mother's arms, laying it tenderly on the soft cushions of the hall davenport. Hurriedly, he and Gladys removed their heavy wraps. There was a worried, haggard look on both faces as they entered Mrs. Longworth's room.

"Mother! Mother! O, mother, darling!" was all Gladys could say as she knelt beside her parent's bed. Sob after sob convulsed her tired body. The sincerity of her sorrow was pitiful. Hallaway stood respectfully at one side while tears, he tried earnestly to control, rolled softly down his cheeks. Mrs. Longworth believed this demonstration of grief was entirely because of her illness and approaching death, which she vaguely apprehended. With effort she stroked the soft blonde hair of her only daughter as the latter, still kneeling, gradually restrained her emotion. There was painful silence. Then, without warning, there came a faint cry. An expression of consternation spread over

Hallaway's features. Gladys raised her eyes first to her lover and then to meet the inquiring gaze of her mother. The infant's wail was repeated louder than before.

At last Raymond Hallaway understood that the combination of a woman's will, and the mixed blood of the Lees and Longworths, were the conditions with which he had to reckon. Unless he desired to seem a brute he would have to make an explanation of his past. His torture was mental. He despised to dig up old bones just to explain WHY the marriage could not take place for months—possibly years. He regretted most of all the distrust of Gladys and dreaded the unnecessary scorn for the baby and its mother. In the darkest hours of his early manhood he had passed through the bitter experience of a social outcast and had no desire to inflict the same punishment on his own loved ones. By taking the baby to Louisville, Hallaway knew it would be impossible to escape the Christian tongue lashings inflicted by pious critics whose chief occupation is to attend the House of God on the Seventh Day to pray for the salvation of their own souls with the remaining six days spent in sending the souls of others to Hell.

During their walk to the depot, Raymond had fully realized the utter futility of further argument. However, there came over him a desire that she would get her fill of the Louisville decision; but he was too much in love, and too much of a father for vicious retaliation. The only punishment Hallaway did decide to inflict was in case Gladys succeeded in exposing him

to public sneers,—then he intended to add sufficient detail concerning his past to cause her vanity to suffer.

"That sounds like the voice of a very small babe, dear. Where is it?" whispered the patient with effort.

"Mother! Oh, my poor mother!" And again Gladys burst into tears.

Hallaway crossed the room to the side of the kneeling figure, lifted her tenderly and drew her within his strong embrace. Neither of the young parents proved equal to the task of concealing their sorrow and remorse. Slowly the truth dawned on the astonished sufferer.

"Raymond,—my boy,—what does this mean?" Mrs. Longworth gasped. "What does this mean?"

"Mother, please—" Gladys tried to answer for her lover.

"Are you married?" the elder woman interrupted.

"Mrs. Longworth, you are too ill to agitate yourself like this—"

"Hush!" The patient's voice was harsh. "This is no time to pity me, nor to tell me to spare my strength. I must know the truth. Are you married?" Her small glistening eyes shone like black beads against her white face.

"No, not yet, but—"

"Don't finish," she cried. "I am in no condition to hear empty excuses. Gladys is nineteen and you are twenty-seven,—both old enough to know the depths —of—crime." Her voice broke for an instant as she choked back the tears. "From you, Raymond, I desire —the truth. You must speak—NOW. I want only—

the truth. Do you—hear me? The TRUTH!" she exclaimed hysterically.

"Mrs. Longworth, I beg of you, please do not exhaust yourself. I will tell you only the truth. This affair will be properly adjusted and Gladys and I will be married as soon as possible. I simply cannot explain further—just now."

Hallaway was willing to tell the elder woman the truth, if matters had to be brought to an immediate issue, but he had a premonition that the truth would kill the patient. Gladys released her trembling body from her lover's arms, and again knelt by the side of Mrs. Longworth. Raymond left the room, returning shortly with his infant daughter. He laid the little one on the bed beside the grandmother where she ceased crying and once more went peacefully to sleep.

"Why have you—not—been married?" and the patient's eyes wandered from the baby to its father.

"Mrs. Longworth, there are conditions I intend fully to explain later. Rest assured, we will be married as soon as it is possible."

"This is terrible," moaned the exhausted woman. "You are both without consideration. Poor, little, nameless soul!" She passed her cold hand lightly over the warm fair face of the infant. "You—must—you positively must—be married—without delay." Here her voice completely failed and again tears forced their way down the withered cheeks.

"So you, too, are going to brand our baby as nameless and illegitimate, just as hundreds of other earthly

saints will do?" And for a moment Hallaway forgot the patient's condition.

"Yes, and not only is it illegitimate, but if it should die, our church teaches, it would go—"

"It matters little to me what your church teaches, or any other for that matter. It is a pity that you have lived all these years on narrow creeds and ancient dogmas, simply because your ancestors were satisfied with them. They used to cut the grain by hand, while now we use machinery. Yet they were perfectly satisfied that there was no better way than theirs at that time."

"That has nothing to do with where your baby will go if it dies." It was plain the sick woman was using every effort to convince Raymond of his error.

"Mrs. Longworth, do you truly suppose that this innocent lamb-of-a-babe would be condemned to eternal damnation by its own Creator,—the all-merciful Judge, for the shortcomings of its parents? Do you truly suppose that my ACKOWLEDGED offspring has not the *same right to my name,* as a *babe born of parents who fairly hate each other, yet have been legally married? Do you truly believe that man-made laws can legalize MY OWN LIFE'S BLOOD more sacredly than the law of Spirit?"* Hallaway was waxing warm, and failed to see the uselessness of arguing with the traditions of a Lee.

"It is illegitimate; it is! Poor little nameless outcast!" sighed the sick woman, whose life had been planned and lived according to the beliefs and dictates of her forefathers, and in fear, instead of the LOVE, of God.

Gladys could no longer remain silent.

"Mother, may I speak?"

"What is there for you to say, my child?"

"For a long time I have tried to make Raymond realize my attitude. Now that I have you both here together, it will make it easier for me to explain," she began. "Once I loved Raymond with a passion akin to adoration. I yearned to marry him, but he made the same evasive excuses to me that he has to you." Hallaway's face was ashen; his expression defiant. "After months of mental humiliation, I believe the old love is dead. I would never marry a man whom my mother or I had to force into doing his duty. Before the baby came I would have begged him on my knees to unite with me in doing the legal and fair thing by our child. I am well now, and—and—oh, mother, can't you understand by entering into a marriage with Raymond, against his desires, it would only sell every particle of self-respect I have left? I will not marry him, that's all,—*I will not.*"

Hallaway and Mrs. Longworth gazed in amazement at the excited girl. Gladys, already risen from her knees, stood close to the foot of the bed where she could better look upon the faces of the two dearest being on earth to her,—her mother and her baby.

"Gladys! My child! Do you realize what you are saying?"

"I do, mother."

"Have you no love for your baby, nor consideration for its blighted future?" gasped the sufferer.

"Yes mother, I have thought of a thousand miser-

able trials, if I were to enter into a loveless marriage simply to give the darling a name. What she lacks legally will be compensated in my unlimited mother-love. I adore my baby, but it would be nothing short of mockery to force this affair further. Without perfect faith, love and honor, marriage becomes a cheap form of licensed sex relationship. Can't you see the consistency of that, mother, dear?"

"Are you sure you do not love Raymond, my child?"

Gladys looked at the father of her baby with a steady eye, then again at her mother.

"In a way, of course I care for him. Once I loved him with a wonderful faith and intensity, but his perpetual excuses and perfect willingness to continue in this dreadful false light before you, our friends, and in defiance of self-respect has—"

"Sweetheart," interrupted Hallaway, "you are unknowingly doing me a great injustice. Try not to say things you will regret."

"See here, Raymond Hallaway," the girl raged, "when I left my mother's home I was ashamed, sick at heart, and almost a physical wreck, but my faith and love for you were sublime. I was indifferent to every one's wishes but yours, your happiness and your selfish desires. I deceived my mother, the best friend a girl ever has, and lied to all my friends for you."

"In the meantime," Hallaway fairly snarled, "I suppose I was running about publishing the whole truth to all the scandal-mongers simply because it happened to be the truth, and not telling dozens of lies to keep your name sweet, and make the future easier for both

of us; not wearing shabby clothes in order to give you and baby some comforts. I was going to dances, entertainments, giving blow-outs, and disposing of my allowance in gay fashion,—never handing you the larger share every week. Oh, I've been having a joyful time, I have."

"Don't, Raymond,—your sarcasm is terrible."

"Your common sense has taken a vacation," he retorted.

"Until we reached the little town where the baby came to comfort me, you led me to believe you would make me your wife. You appeared more than persistent that I promise before God not to fail you."

"That is still my desire. No time was mentioned. The date was the one subject I purposely avoided. It has been my honest desire to be married as soon as possible. It is my honest desire unless you keep on nagging me to desperation."

"I understood there was some secret reason for your not being open and above board with me and, because I trusted and loved you so, accepted the situation without weighing consequences."

"This is surely one fine time to start weighing consequences," came the ironical reply.

Gladys tossed her head haughtily, as she continued:

"All I needed to come unto myself was to tell the truth to mother."

"You certainly took the proper time to do it, and have exhibited extreme unselfishness for your mother's health. I am positive this will be a vital factor toward her improvement."

"If I had your sarcastic tongue I'd never speak," and Gladys choked back the tears.

"If I had your nagging one I'd amputate it," he flashed back.

"Well," she sighed, "I have learned that it frequently takes the gall of a mistake to make us clean, to broaden our vision, and to radiate the light of a soul."

"I can't see that it has broadened your vision to any great extent; neither can I notice any particularly intelligent reflection from your soul."

"You are in a cruel mood, and I think for mother's sake we better stop."

"I'm not cruel. If you grasped the full value of your remarks about the reflection of your soul, you would not be taking the attitude on life, on your promises, or about our baby that you do."

With an air of disgust, Hallaway crossed over to the window and gazed at the storm without, drawing silent comparison to the turmoil within.

"No matter what your desire may be," Gladys persisted, "you cannot correct this wrong by marrying me, because there is no longer love or respect between us."

"It would be of little use without love or respect. But, I wonder if you can recall what we concluded constituted real marriage, after all?"

"I'm too nervous to try; what is it?"

"That there can be no Immortal or Spiritual union of two souls, even with a legal ceremony, if there is doubt, distrust, or lack of respect. There is no doubt in genuine marriage. There is no cause for doubt be-

tween two souls who truly respect the spiritual and moral rights of Divine Intelligence. WITHOUT RESPECT marriage becomes a farce. There is no man-made law which can CREATE respect, or convert a legal ceremony into a GODLY UNION. Rest assured there is love and respect a'plenty between us,—only you must cease nagging on the impossible for the present, and capitalize the words: LOVE, TRUST and TRUTH. In addition you must learn the *correct* conception of truth."

"It is a case of abiding by my convictions until I am convinced they are wrong."

"Then it is my duty to convince you."

"It is immaterial how hard you try to convince me, but don't force my sick mother into believing I would wilfully bring this helpless baby into the world," and Gladys hesitated long enough to kiss the little one's tiny pink hand, "had I not trusted implicitly in your promises. Since her birth my eyes have opened to the fact that men, like you, who are not forced into seeing the crime of their ways by stronger women than I proved to be, eventually show themselves animated mixtures of polished cruelty and selfishness."

Raymond came closer to Gladys and took both her hands holding them reverently against his breast.

"Little girl, again you have called me, figuratively, all the low cowardly names my patience can endure. Much of what you have said appears true to you, but you have, womanlike, passed judgment before trial." Then he added more gently: "This is hardly becoming

of you considering our former understanding and the extenuating circumstances."

"It seems to me you are trying to resurrect the old love, and destroy my principles," she cried, attempting to break away.

"You are confusing your principles with your prejudices," he stoutly maintained.

"My, what?" she queried.

"Like a great many well-meaning people, you mistake your prejudices, resulting from traditional influences, for principles. Genuine principles like genuine truth, is filled with love, mercy and divine protection; while your idea of principle and truth is of the Shylock variety, a merciless imitation of the real."

"Raymond, you are trying to play on my former love."

"That's where you are mistaken, little girl, but I AM going to cause you mental suffering that all along I have earnestly tried to avoid. You have forced my decision, denouncing me as a coward before I even showed an inclination to desert the ship." He still held her hands, and drew her closer. "I am going to convince you and your sick mother that my one wish in life is to marry you,—the noblest, dearest girl, I ever knew."

"It is too late for that part now,—the part about marrying me. Before baby came I humbled my pride so low that I even pleaded with you to have the ceremony performed so she might be born in wedlock. Now, all that is over. My mother knows the horrible truth. Thank God, I have been spared further self-

contempt. I can prove the stuff latent within me by leaving all hysterical tears and humiliating beseeching to the dead past."

"You do not mean, dear, you prefer the baby,—our baby, to be without its own father?" broke in Hallaway.

"I mean the actual proofs that my convictions are wrong, will be the only influence sufficiently strong to change my attitude."

"And, I? The baby's father?" he reiterated.

"Such is the least of my worries, since, according to your own theories, the ALL-Merciful and REAL Father is a Just Judge, and does not look to the innocent babe to criticise character. He will bring proper punishment in His Own time to the offenders and not the offended."

"But, for the physical and moral protection that you cannot give the baby?"

"I will do the best I can for her," maintained Gladys emphatically.

The look Gladys met in her lover's eyes was one of sudden defiance, and hardly what she expected after trying to convince him that her conclusion was correct.

"I am willing to lower my head in shame for my weakness," protested Hallaway, "but I am not willing to be branded a traitor until proven such. Gladys, you are worming something out of the secrets of my soul which, from the hour I first learned to love you, I have endeavored to spare you. Now, by the Eternal, you shall hear it all,—all of the miserable truth. Yes,

no matter how it hurts, you shall have the whole disgusting truth."

"My children! My children! I simply cannot endure this wrangling any longer," interrupted the exhausted patient. "The idea of denying your baby its legal and moral rights! Such talk is shameful! Raymond," she added, turning her face in his direction, "Tell me now—what—excuses you have—to—offer."

This effort proved too much for the sick woman and, without warning, she suddenly lost consciousness. For several moments Hallaway worked over the prostrate form, while Gladys called frantically on the 'phone for the family physician. At last Mrs. Longworth responded to the emergency treatment, slowly opening her tired eyes and bravely making an effort to speak.

"Just a little water;—my medicine, too. Feeling better—already. Guess—I'm good—for several—days yet."

"Of course you are, mother, dear; you are going to live and be your own well self again."

All the while Gladys recognized her mother's chances for recovery were slight. Mrs. Longworth's sudden turn for the worse caused no little uneasiness in the minds of both young people. After considerable persuasion, they won her consent to wait until the following day to talk further concerning Hallaway's reasons for not marrying Gladys.

CHAPTER IV.

THE morning of the second day the parents sat close to the bed, while the baby lay sleeping near its grandmother, at the latter's request. Slowly Hallaway arose, and with head bent forward and hands clasped behind him, began to pace between the fireplace and the window.

"Raymond, my boy, are you ready to answer my question of yesterday?" Mrs. Longworth's white face against the pillow looked strangely clouded as the reflection from the burning log cast shadows over the wrinkled skin. This seemed to the young medical student to be the moment in which to divulge the truth. He faced his sweetheart and her mother with unflinching resolve as he began:—

"Mrs. Longworth, this whole affair has been made blacker by my beastly selfishness."

He looked unshrinkingly into the eyes of the older woman as he spoke, and felt keenly the scrutinizing gaze of Gladys. Intuitively he understood his sweetheart's doubts and knew she thought he intended to trump up some lie to appease the wrath of her mother. He also knew for once he would send the hideous truth so far into the depths of her very soul that she would comprehend the sorrow of his lonely life, and have a better conception of his temptations.

Raymond loved Gladys with a kind of love which,

though irritated at times by conditions, is lenient in its judgment, and lasting. He loved her weaknesses as well as her virtues. Her present attitude startled him. He thought when the opportunity came she would be capable of applying many of the theories which each had previously considered proper. Hallaway was too big a man, however, to care less for the mother of his child. He felt the hurt more deeply than Gladys realized, because of additional responsibilities and a certain sensitiveness acquired after overcoming his vices.

What he intended saying might arouse his sweetheart's utmost hatred. It might make her even more determined to obliterate him from her life. It could create a certain type of pity, and he despised pity. It was possible—just possible—to influence Gladys into waiting, as he desired, to be married at the earliest moment. Hallaway was forced into taking the chance. There was no choice left. All these thoughts whirled through his brain as he hesitated an instant.

"I was unusually selfish and jealous in my wooing," he continued. "All men are selfish, and most men are jealous, when they desire one certain woman for their very own. Men seldom love as women love; if they do, part of the primitive, fighting, protecting instinct is absent. It takes these attributes to make real men. The average man forgets all else, when he woos in his passionate blindness, but the divine glory and exquisite bliss of embracing a charmingly sweet woman who will eventually belong to him."

The epigrammatical statements were at least commanding attention and Hallaway felt he had made the right beginning.

"The great force of love in man," he continued, "is influenced entirely by the power of firm but charming resistance, or, the abandon with which a woman exerts her mental and physical attractions."

Gladys thought she perceived the underlying motive in her lover's last remark.

"Men," he added earnestly, with his closed right fist firmly set in the palm of his left hand, "do not deliberately go about ruining women; neither do they harm them simply to blight the happiness or pollute the purity of the gentler sex; but the great physical strength and robust health of the male is the basis of that mysterious force which causes men to be not unlike the male of any species,—gormandizers of passion. This characteristic in men is tempered and influenced by habit, environment, education, temptation, early motherly tact and instruction."

Both women were intensely interested. Mrs. Longworth silently and feebly motioned Gladys to a small rocker. Hallaway noticed the respectful silence, and though he did not intend to cast blame on the mother of his baby, he was determined to impress the two women with his intention of doing the right thing at the proper time and he had felt obliged to preface his confession.

"Where mothers," he went on, "are afflicted with unsympathetic ignorance, loathsome false pride, and

are afraid to be square and frank with the natural instincts of their sons and permit them to be instructed by their companions or sad experiences,—then the most wonderful privilege of motherhood has been neglected. That sublime message portraying perfect health, cleanliness, self-respect, natural development, normal offspring, and true Christian comradeship can only be delivered properly by the understanding mother. The mother who fails through false ideals has a hideous conception of her responsibility to future generations, and she frequently lives to see her son, or her son's son, in a pathetic state of physical suffering or degeneracy."

The two women were astonished. Hallaway was presenting a view of life, the reality of which had not occurred to either of them. Gladys did not yet comprehend the reason for his statements, but she realized their moral value. Mrs. Longworth almost forgot the sharp pains in her lungs, and her faculties were keenly alert, though the effort was visibly taxing.

"Men," Hallaway went on, speaking in convincing tones, "forget all conventionalities when lovable women permit familiarities. Women either by nature or cultivation are natural hypnotists. This is true even among the ignorant or the female of the animal species, —the female alures; it must be so."

"But in our case,—" Gladys was commencing to wince under the strain of the truth.

"Pardon me, my darling, you had your full say yesterday, pronouncing judgment on me before trial.

Surely you will give me even a late opportunity for defense."

Gladys closed her lips firmly, and lowered her eyes. It was evident Hallaway's remarks were having an effect that gave him courage to continue.

"Men whose mentalities are regularly stimulated by intoxicating drinks, are victimized through liquor into believing they are masters of crucial situations; whereas, they are generally slaves of egotism and invariably misinterpret a low standard of sex attraction for sincere and lasting effection."

Mrs. Longworth asked to have another pillow placed under her head that she might have a better view of Raymond and hear more distinctly. This was Raymond's one chance to convince the woman he loved that he was not all bad, and he did not intend to miss the opportunity. Once more he resumed the thread of discourse.

"Women are natural lovers of conquest,—the type of possession enjoyed by most women and apparently cunningly disdained by others. They let men go on playing the part of sentimental fools, or making the most ardent love filled with intense passion,—NOT because women are truly responsive, but because they are ARTISTS OF PRETENSE and vultures of vanity, encouraging men by pretending that they reciprocate. Women do not play the love game to the danger point because they truly desire the seriousness of the burning exaltation,—but because they selfishly adore the sensation of conquering victims; because they rejoice in their victory over other women; and

because they glory in observing men at love's maddest pinnacle. Women deny this with fascinating modesty, —the convincing kind they use on men when they are in the game to win. Indeed, women often deny this with prettily affected horror; but pitiless and accurate history and hundreds of broken lives have proven the truth of my words. Women take an unseemly pleasure in the tantalizing methods they exert when cooling impassioned men into submissiveness with a crooning, artful, babyish deception and resistance clothed in apparent trust."

"Raymond, I never used such methods with you,—"

"I am not referring to you in particular, my dear, but to women in general. To be still more frank, I am referring to the days of my very early manhood when I drank excessively, and thank God, you did not know me."

"Possibly you would have had a kinder impression of women, and life would have been vastly different had I met you then," sighed the younger woman.

"Perhaps," came the evasive answer. "My poor little girl! It was my wish to spare you all this." For a moment he closed his eyes as though to blind from memory life's merciless pictures. A deep sigh escaped his lips. "When I was drinking heavily at twenty-one and sowing an abundance of wild oats, I was guilty of some mighty imprudent acts."

Gladys shuddered visibly, and gave the burning log a poke which started the flames and sparks to snapping brightly. She yearned to hear of Raymond's past, yet

dreaded to listen for fear of learning something that might make her wretched for life.

"One night a number of my companions and I attended a week-end dance at a country Tavern, owned by a Frank Allen and his wife, where we were all rather well known, and where there resided several attractive, rosy-cheeked country girls,—daughters or nieces of the owners. During the evening I became sentimentally intoxicated. I caressed everything from a post to one of the pretty daughters. Frank Allen and his wife knew my mother was a gentle, refined woman, and my father a prosperous druggist and respected citizen. They also knew me to be a fairly decent fellow when sober, so what I did was considered a 'lark' for the time being. The fair one of my choice, Stella Allen, was a graceful dancer, and a charming waitress. She was especially partial to me and before the evening was half over I was her groveling slave.

"How any lovable girl could caress and encourage a young chap so uncertain of his desires as I was that night has always remained a mystery. However, it may be attributed to the fact that I never staggered when drunk, used polished language and gave the impression of having perfect control of my faculties. In reality it was the alcohol stimulating my debauched nerves, and the slightest encouragement was all I needed to act the fool. The following noon I found myself attending the final ceremonies of my wedding breakfast. My bride was seated at my left, attired in her best gown, the minister across from me, and

Stella's mother and father at the head and foot of the table. There were any number of hurriedly summoned relatives, as well as the county clerk who had ridden—I was later informed—at my insistence, post-haste to the Tavern with the marriage license. My companions also remained for the wedding feast and looked a shame-faced lot."

Mrs. Longworth never moved her eyes from Hallaway's and her expression revealed little more than the ravages of illness. Gladys had lost her arrogance and her eyes glistened with unshed tears while her face was a picture of pity.

"I whispered to Stella inquiring the nature of the celebration. She laughed and asked me jokingly if it were my intention to apply for a divorce so early. She also said the black coffee was causing a change in my sentiments, and it was most unbecoming to forget my wife so soon. Then and there I realized I had made a fool of myself, all through association with the Demon Rum. As quietly as possible one of my companions led me into another room where he told me the truth, explaining I had insisted on an immediate marriage; had vowed in eloquent phrases, and before everyone, my eternal love for Stella Allen; and had deliberately arranged all details for the wedding with as much authority and saneness as anyone possibly could. There had not been a doubt in the minds of the Allen family that my one desire in life had just been realized."

Again Hallaway walked slowly across the room,

looked out into the dreary storm, and returned to his point of vantage.

"Stella was respectable and as intelligent as girls of that class go. She tried to educate herself. I've often thought," Hallaway reminisced a bit, "if the dreadful accident which happened months later, had not occurred she would have taken up some special study and succeeded.

"I was so ashamed to face my parents again that I remained at the Tavern. My chums were loyal to me and kept my secret. In my heart I knew Stella Allen was vastly better morally and spiritually than I with my proud family, and a brain polluted with alcohol. I felt a certain lack of self-respect, but liquor had weakened my will and I was powerless. There came over me a drunkard's type of humiliation when I stopped to consider Stella was giving all she possessed while I was contributing only a porter's labors for her father in return. I drank heavily to forget my extreme degradation; and thought my dreams of being a physician were forever lost. The only method apparently open to me was the coward's way of avoiding realities, —liquor.

"I remained at the Tavern for almost a year. My lonely, heart-broken mother died, and about the same time my father paid me an unexpected visit. Father appreciated the honest effort poor Stella was making to influence me to return to my studies and make a man of myself. He liked the girl's sincerity and simplicity. They tried to pull me out of the mire. She used to say she'd willingly sacrifice her future if I

would only convince my father there was still some material worth while in my make-up. Providence is a wonderful molder of situations. Stella seemingly entered a living death to awaken ambition and self-respect in me; at least that is the pitifully impressive lesson I received from the shock after her horrible experience.

"We had been married less than two years when my wife began teaching dancing to help pay for our clothes, room and board, which my own indifferent labors failed to do. Stella had a large signboard made, stating the days for private lessons, the evenings for classes, and the prices. This was fastened to an upper window frame of the old building used as a residence. One July morning there was an unusually severe rain. As soon as the storm ceased, Stella went outside under the window to rescue some of her plants. I was standing beside her watching her caress a forlorn looking geranium as tenderly as she would a sick child. Suddenly I heard a crackling sound and stepped out a bit, just in time to miss the crash myself,—but turning quickly I saw the signboard fall squarely against my wife's skull."

"Raymond! Raymond!" Finding she could no longer hide her tears, Gladys crossed over and knelt by her mother's bed where she hid her face in the soft folds of the baby's pink coverlet. The little one moved slightly. Gladys, thankful for an excuse to be occupied, took the baby in her arms and returned to the comfortable rocker. The sacred picture of mother and

child did not fail to attract Hallaway's eye for the beautiful.

"From the blow my wife received, insanity followed. The law," he ejaculated, "would not grant me a divorce from an insane woman. I could not bring myself to take such a step, even if it were possible while she lies at the threshold of death. It is impossible to forget that Stella served me like a faithful slave without one vestige of love in return. It was she who convinced me of my errors. It was she who showed me that I truly possessed the Intelligence to create a completely new condition of affairs, if I actually and truly desired to change. It was she who pointed out that I did not need medicine, rum or a body guard to assist me in *proving* my manhood. All I actually required was to use my own forces which lay dormant within me, and which I had weakly or deliberately ignored. Liquor has never passed my lips since, though it would be untrue to say I have been devoid of temptation."

Hallaway looked directly at the mother of his baby as he spoke.

"I won't touch it, simply because I am not going to permit someone or something, especially alcohol, to be my master. It is a terrible, haunting memory I have of Stella."

The name of his unfortunate wife was uttered in his characteristically deep, gentle voice, but with added reverence in the tone. Raymond Hallaway made no pretense of loving his legal wife, but in his heart there was a profound respect based on a woman's sacrifice and moral courage.

Poor Gladys gazed into space. As she held the baby pressed against her breast, visions of dismal failures, mocking horrors, constant temptations, and renewed efforts through which her lover must have passed to have lifted himself out of the gutter to what he was today, rushed in maddening confusion before her. Without changing her almost stupified expression, her lips moved audibly.

"And all this while I doubted your intention to keep your word because you evaded the truth, or rather because you refused to tell me about this terrible affair. I understand now, dear. It certainly has been a nerve-racking ordeal. What a comfort to know that since then you have been sufficiently strong to be *all man.*"

"In no step have I had anything but the most honest of intentions. As dark as it may look before others, it is the legal aspect of the situation in which I have been deficient. Yes, little girl, I needed just such an awful awakening to have the courage to start anew. I am afraid nothing less would have shocked me into a full knowledge that I was in a mighty bad way.

"You see, coming back to my reference to motherhood, mother never talked to me,—she left it to father, and he rather thought experience would teach me all that is necessary for a boy to know about the moral problems in life. They meant well, but I passed through the depths of degradation on their good intentions. One woman became insane and her family know neither peace nor joy today. To them the sunshine of life set forever when Stella was taken to the asylum. So much for the far-reaching calamity caused

by mistaken modesty of motherhood. There is no greater privilege than that of being a consistent mother, and no more fearful tragedy than being made a mother when devoid of tact and understanding."

Gladys slowly nodded her head, repeating her lover's last remark in a manner convincing him of the seriousness with which she had grasped the responsibility of motherhood: "There is no greater privilege than that of being a CONSISTENT mother, and no more fearful tragedy than being made a mother when devoid of tact and understanding."

"Poor mother!" Hallaway resumed. "She loved me with a blind devotion, and directed me as hundreds of other loving, well-intentioned mothers direct their sons,—with a false modesty which eventually ends in tragedy. Like most mothers, she possessed a mistaken idea of indulgence."

"Did Stella realize her intense suffering?" came the anxious query, interupting the trend of Hallaway's narrative.

"No, dear; for days and nights following a serious operation, she lay like one dumb with her head wrapped in heavy bandages. When she was able to speak again and the paralysis had partly left her, she was destitute of memory. At first we attributed this to the pneumonia and paralysis which followed the operation, but after a time the surgeon sent for a specialist who told us the awful truth. Since then, at intervals, the Allen family have had three operations performed on her. Of late, Stella has become gradually weaker, and the house physician at the Insane Hospital recently in-

formed us that tuberculosis has developed, and it is but a matter of a very short time until she will pass unto the blessed reward she so richly deserves."

Mrs. Longworth closed her heavy eyelids during the final part of Raymond's discourse, and her face was drawn with pain. Her emaciated fingers were clinched as though summoning the last vestige of self-control.

"Raymond," faintly whispered the weary patient.

Hallaway crossed over to Mrs. Longworth's side and knelt on one knee, that he might better hear her weak voice.

"My boy, the one legal wife is safe from all worldly harm and where she—will—enter—her—deserved—rest; but your baby and my little girl—have both—just launched upon perpetual misery—unless—unless—." Here she stopped short as though wondering how to express the warning in her heart, the while a sigh escaped her parched lips, and one lone tear forced its way down the sad face. "Their awakening will come—after I am gone. The world will scoff—and scorn. Guard these two—lonely souls—with your every move—and highest sense of honor." The struggle to speak proved too much, and her thin body shook with sobs.

Gladys placed the sleeping infant on the far side of the bed beside its grandmother and knelt on the near side close to Raymond, that she, too, might hear every word. All three were too overcome by the revelations to express more than their understanding in that most pathetic silence.

"Little girl,—wife of my heart," Hallaway looked into the large blue eyes of the woman he loved, "I have

never broken a promise to you, though I have been secretive concerning this vital subject,—and now that you know the truth, there never need be a shadow of doubt. Will you remain faithful to me, and believe in me, as I will in you, not only for the sake of our child, but the divine love we bear each other? Dearest, do you give me the same deep love that I give you? Do you?"

Gladys bowed her head in the affirmative. Words seemed beyond her.

"Bury these notions about independence, and not marrying me because I failed to comply with your demands before the baby came, and promise to become my wife. I will do all in my power to make up for every hour of sorrow with two of joy. You will then be lawfully mine as I feel you are now, spiritually, before Divine Justice, and the All-Considerate God. I swear this! Gladys, I swear it!" Raymond Hallaway lifted his right hand then laid it on the forehead of his tiny daughter.

Both women remained silent, though their features revealed that earnest contemplation which a mental battle makes visible. The older woman was resignedly facing the last great problem of her life and yearned to know that her child would remain firm and true to her dying wishes. Gladys was crushing a wounded pride and trying to meet bitter reality with optimism and carry out her mother's desires. She knew the most unworthy error had been committed, and her baby would become the greatest sufferer of all. She also

realized that to deprive her child of its own father, if he proved worthy of the waiting, would only add a more ghastly mistake for her already miserable conscience to expiate.

In thinking it all over, Gladys bravely acknowledged that it was her natural allurements, her suggestive sex-hypnotism, and her very weaknesses that had drawn her into the present trouble; just as much as Hallaway's intensely human impulses and baser selfishness which is prevalent with most men, and particularly augmented in her lover's character.

"I am not the brute I have appeared to be; neither do I blame others for my failures, nor excuse myself for my selfishness. There is plenty of heart in this healthy body of mine, and I love you," Hallaway added vehemently, as he gazed searchingly into Gladys' upturned face, and rested his left hand impressively on the silken waves of her blonde hair. "I love you,—you wonderful, beautiful woman, far more than I can find words to express. It is this intense love, the maddening desire to possess you for my own, that has been the cause of all our troubles. Tell me once more, beloved," he gently tilted her head backward, as he turned her fair face in his direction, "will you promise to marry me, if I am all I should be, just as soon as I am free?"

"With that proviso, and our love for each other, I can scarcely see how it is possible to refuse." She spoke low and earnestly, with the slightest evidence of embarrassment.

"Thank you, Gladys,—but you have not yet told me whether you love me as before."

"In a way I love you more because I know your real self, and what you have conquered. It is no little mental satisfaction to be able to share your Garden of Gethsemane. It was I who really forced you deeper into your present trials by my lack of womanly resistance,—"

"No, no,—" Hallaway endeavored to save Gladys from her personal condemnation.

"Oh, yes, it was. It was my very weaknesses,—the kind, which at the time, seemed more wonderful to exercise than womanly to resist, that led you on; but," she burst forth impulsively, "ah, Raymond, I adored you then, as I do now! Can't you see that I love you? I love you! I love you!"

Raymond crushed the yielding form to his, and covered the beautiful face with kisses.

"My darling! My own, precious darling! You have made me so happy!"

Mrs. Longworth smiled a silent benediction. She was convinced all would end well with Gladys and the baby. With her blessing, there fell a few tears from the weary eyes

For three days and two nights Gladys remained by her mother's bedside, tenderly nursing the suffering patient and carrying out the instructions of Doctor Blaine, the Longworth family physician. He came twice a day, but with each visit his attitude became more serious. He complimented Gladys on her obeying his orders but gave her no definite encouragement

that the patient would recover. During this period Hallaway was preparing for the first of his final senior examinations to be held in April. He kept steadily to his room. The morning of the third day dawned with a severe March blizzard. Dora had built a cheerful log fire, but every moan of the wind made poor Gladys feel an ill omen, as she watched her mother's labored breathing.

"Mother Mother, dear!" She spoke soothingly as Mrs. Longworth turned her pale face in the direction of the burning logs. "Can you see the wonderful pictures in the red embers?"

"It hurts my eyes, child; but—I love—the minor music in the sounds—of the wind—up the chimney. I enjoy the warmth of the glow—from the fire—against my cheek." Her voice was so faint that Gladys had to bend low to catch every word. As Mrs. Longworth had no contagious disease, she had requested them to bring the little one to her room for a few minutes night and morning. In obedience to her wishes, Hallaway entered with the baby and stood silently at one side, looking upon the pathetic figure of the sorrowing girl-mother and the dying woman. Doctor Blaine arrived and drew a chair close to the bed. The kind old man felt the faltering pulse and instantly perceived the change for the worse. Gladys leaned over the bed from the opposite side and peered into the physician's face, anxious for one ray of hope.

The patient moved slightly and smiled sadly, as she whispered: "The baby! Where is the baby?"

"Right here, mother, darling. Raymond is holding her."

"Oh, yes," and the dim eyes tried to locate Raymond, but closed for want of strength.

For a few moments there was suspense and silence; then the patient made a final effort to greet the Doctor.

"I'm glad you have come; beautiful morning; so peaceful." Over the sharp features came an expression of rest and content. "So peaceful," she repeated.

Instinctively the two lovers thought of the cold March blizzard without. The good man who was watching with them waited humbly for the Greater Physician to call a soul HOME. Doctor Blaine understood that his patient felt no pain. To her, the morning was the beginning of a beautiful dawn, and she was peacefully waiting to start on her journey. A few more anxious moments and the physician tenderly closed the half open lids and laid the wasted hands across her breast.

Gladys did not yet comprehend that her mother had quietly gone out of this life without the bitter pain of parting. She took the unresponsive hand nearest her and caressed and kissed it, the while bathing its marble whiteness with her tears. As Doctor Blaine rose, too filled with supressed emotion to speak, Gladys looked up with the countenance of a trusting child, inquiry unspoken on her lips. She needed no further information than the pity and regret so visible on the physician's honest face. Hallaway moved nearer to the

bed, and with his free arm, drew the weeping young mother to his side.

"Let me help you, beloved," he whispered tenderly.

"Oh, Raymond, my mother,—my mother is gone." And the heart-broken girl rested her throbbing head against her lover's breast.

CHAPTER V

THE Longworth home seemed cold and still after the funeral. The only sounds for two long months, were those of faithful Dora at her customary duties and the occasional disturbances of the baby. There was no hiding the little one; its cries and coos would echo through the large-old-fashioned rooms, and in a very short time "Madam Grundy" was busy. With one excuse after another, as they found out actual conditions, the students had chosen quarters elsewhere. Fewer friends called. The unwise decision to make Louisville the home for the baby began slowly to dawn on Gladys.

Without roomers, the young mother was destitute save half of Hallaway's small allowance. She advertised her rooms for rent, but only one or two came to investigate. It was early in May, near the closing of school and most of the students were either going home or were satisfied with their lodgings. For a time Hallaway obtained work as an assistant bookkeeper in one of the banks which was open evenings, but this was discontinued because his studies suffered. During the last few weeks of Hallaway's senior year he became almost a nervous wreck from over-study and worry. Every little cry of the baby irritated him.

His demonstrations of affection toward Gladys almost ceased. His evenings were divided between the college research library and the Longworth private study.

Limited finances was another cause of worry. Dora, the servant, the upkeep of the Longworth home, and Hallaway's newly acquired family had to be maintained out of his senior year's expense money. Gladys felt she was a decided burden. She reasoned it would be possible to sell the old home and by investing the money wisely provide a small income to tide over the three of them until Hallaway could become established in a lucrative practice.

With this idea, Gladys visited her mother's lawyer, Judge Thomas Breckenridge, and explained the situation. He had heard of her trouble and had used his influence quietly in her behalf. Slowly and carefully the Judge went over all the family papers with Gladys, and in his tactful, gentle way made the truth plain to her. It seems that several years after the death of the Colonel, Mrs. Longworth had found it necessary to place a second mortgage on the property to keep up social appearances for her daughter's sake and to give the latter a finishing education in music and painting. Judge Breckenridge had purchased the second mortgage from the Merchant's Bank and never required the widow of his former friend to pay either interest or principal on the same. He also managed to pay the interest on the first mortgage, but did not feel it was part of friendship's privilege to pay off the principal of the first mortgage which the bank was demanding. As Colonel Longworth's widow knew

little about business, she left her financial matters almost entirely to her lawyer. He, in turn, had learned with years of family association to care for Mrs. Longworth with deep consideration. It was his secret delight to know, even when she refused his tender advances, that he had made it possible for her to remain in the old mansion. When the Bank pressed their claim for the principal on the first mortgage, the Judge had used his influence before the trustees to extend payment for a few months longer. The widow never asked concerning the mortgages, but the bank ran its affairs on a business basis, and when the extended term had expired and still the first mortgage remained unpaid, they foreclosed. At that critical period the Judge asked the trustees once more not to notify Mrs. Longworth, as she was dangerously ill. After her death, the bank still continued to be liberality personified, owing to the insistence of the family lawyer, and permitted Gladys Longworth to remain in the old home until such time as Judge Breckenridge would inform them that he had found suitable apartments for his young client. After he was informed concerning the humiliation of Colonel and Mrs. Longworth's only child he was hesitating as to the next move when Gladys paid him this unexpected visit. Frequently during the last two years of Mrs. Longworth's life, Judge Breckenridge had wondered if she ever gave a thought to the ways and means by which she and Gladys had been able to retain the Longworth mansion. It appeared not,—as that proud Southern woman held her head high, asked few questions or

favors, but accepted the condition of affairs as her allotted portion.

This attitude on the widow's part was not conceit or arrogance, but rather a trait born of reticence and simplicity which had been encouraged by both her late husband and the family advisor. Judge Breckenridge, like the Colonel, had secretly lifted all burdens, and never permitted Mrs. Longworth to know by act or word to what extent she was under obligation to him. This sweet delusion was the only reward the Judge desired as a substitute for the love he truly craved and which the widow denied him. Gladys gradually became aware of the silent charity. The generosity of the man before her had been so great as to hold his friendship above the price of a lawyer's fee or a woman's indifference. He had made it possible for both her mother and herself to have a roof over their heads.

"Can it be that the home I thought was mine, is actually gone?" Gladys sighed.

"Dear little girl, I wish it were otherwise," he replied. "For several months I have known of this calamity but it was useless to warn your mother as I knew she had no means other than the small sum obtained from renting rooms. She was a proud woman and if I had told her that I paid off the second mortgage and the interest on both first and second, she would have ended a lifelong friendship. As to informing you,—well, I neglected it for several good reasons."

"Surely you don't treat all your clients in the un-

selfish manner you have dealt with mother and me, do you?"

"I try to be considerate, my child; but I wouldn't freely and secretly give up several thousand dollars for the benefit of any other woman, but—but your mother."

Gladys looked confused. The Judge laid his thin rough hand over hers as he continued speaking.

"It may appear strange to you that a man of my years and position never married." He spoke as one looking back over wasted dreams. "I desired to, and intended doing so when your father and I were young chums. I never was a rushing wooer but I always have been sincere and loyal to my one love. Your father was a handsome, dashing lover, and asked the girl of our mutual admiration to marry him before it dawned on me that I'd ever have the temerity to do so, and—and—he won out."

"Did you love mother?" Gladys looked bewitchingly like Mrs. Longworth at the same age.

"I've always loved her, Gladys. Of course after they were married, I buried my love in dry books," and he motioned to the wall cases full of the best authorities on law. "I was your father's attorney and friend as long as he lived, and never by word or look did I cause his heart to ache by one reference to the mighty weight on my own.

"After your father's death I carried out his wishes to the letter; and your mother and I spent many a splendid evening together. She was a good reader and

chose interesting literature; and just to be in her company I'd read books with her."

"I never heard mother refer to you except in a business way, but once," interposed Gladys. "Now that you have spoken of your personal regard for her, I particularly recall the incident. It was on a warm summer's evening. The gentle southern breezes were fanning the silver in her hair. She looked beautiful in the moonlight, as we rocked slowly back and forth, side by side in the hammock under the old elm. The branches spread gracefully, and the moon shone through directly on her lovely face as she talked. We had talked on many topics,—possibilities and probabilities of the future. Mother took my face between her two soft hands, and said: 'My little girl will always have one friend, for his friendship has been profoundly loyal to me. No more sincere man lives than Tom Breckenridge.' Later, I recall, she said your honesty as a lawyer had kept you from both fame and wealth, —but so long as she lived there would be no one but you as our advisor."

Judge Breckenridge listened with rapt attention as he heard from the lips of her living child the words of his dear dead friend.

"Why were you not at the funeral if—if you loved mother all these years?"

"Simple reason; don't believe in curiosity-gathering services. I never attended a funeral since I was old enough to have serious thoughts. To me, death is only a peaceful means of spiritual ascension. With the possible exception of one's immediate family (who

naturally take the last farewell much as they would were the loved one living and going to some distant land for a number of years), friends and acquaintances should pay their acts of kindness and tributes of respect while one is living.

"What is the end of life to you?" Gladys asked interestedly.

"There is no end, child. As we live here, or better still, as we leave off here, so we begin THERE."

"That is the way I feel about it. No wonder your days are filled with unselfishness. You must be wonderfully comforted to know all these things, and live with such an ideal during the autumn of your own life. You feel that your spirit goes right along unfolding according to the way you lived here."

"Exactly, dear. I didn't attend your father's funeral either, my child. I believed he had entered upon his deserved reward and I complimented his memory by being a true friend to his widow." For a few moments there was silence as each meditated on the sacred memories of the past.

"By the way," the Judge continued, "here is a receipt for two monument headmarks which I had placed over the graves of your parents, made out as purchased by you. Tombstones are much like numbers on the houses in which we live; if the numbers were not over the doors our friends might not find us quite so easily."

Tears gathered in Gladys' eyes, and her voice choked with emotion. Again Tom Breckenridge had shown his devotion to the dead, and unselfishness to the

living. Gladys leaned over and touched her lips respectfully to the white hand which rested carelessly on his desk close to hers.

"Will you tell me why, or should I refrain from asking—why did you not tell mother of your love after father's death?"

He smiled at her inquisitiveness, and after a moment's contemplation, replied:

"About eight years ago, I started to explain to your mother how I always had loved her, and how pure and true my love had been. She suddenly arose and leaning toward me whispered as though some unseen spirit might be listening: 'Do not say any more; it will spoil our wonderful friendship of so many years. We chose different paths long, long ago. I need you for my friend and legal advisor. Is that enough?' Then she quietly walked out of my office."

"And you calmly did as she requested?" Gladys asked quizzically.

"There is a vast difference in the persistency and impulsiveness of youth and—the calm resignation of maturer years," responded the Judge, reminiscently. "There is no doubt, had I been several years younger I might have clasped her delicate hands in mine and forced her to listen to reason. But some way," he went on with a sigh, "I just continued to worship her from afar; trying to believe it might have been a promise she made to your father, and—it might have been."

His features reddened and for an instant the cords of his neck stood out conspicuously. He was making

a valiant struggle to hide regret and appear contented. Gladys forgot her own troubles and the object of her visit.

"Well, little girl," and he assumed a businesslike attitude, "what are your plans for the future?"

Womanlike, and bound to hear all there was concerning her mother's love affair, Gladys ventured sweetly: "Would you care to have some token of mother's? I might give you a tiny ivory clock she wound nightly for many years. You could use it here on your desk."

"Will you? Indeed I'd appreciate it," he answered enthusiastically. "I also have two small articles in the safe which she left on the occasion of her last visit to my office. As your mother never came to see me here again, and never asked for them when I went to call on her,—I locked the little trinkets up as mementos most sacred to me."

With that the Judge opened the heavy iron doors of his private vault, and drew forth a black enameled tin box, out of which, from the folds of faded tissue paper, he displayed a faintly scented lace handkerchief and one fingerless white silk lace glove. Gladys touched them reverently. They had been her mother's.

"She knows they are mine now, no doubt; and I hardly believe she would desire to retain me strictly as her lawyer, do you?"

Gladys couldn't answer just then, being somewhat overcome with the confession of this buried love. She had much to unburden to the Judge but determined not to spoil this visit.

"Don't think me a fool, Gladys, but no man or woman is ever too old to love. Some way the love of youth is full of blindness and passion which frequently spends its strength and fades into a mocking memory; while the love of maturity is deep, steady and marvelous in its loyalty, enduring and protecting with a silent magnificence. Well," he continued with a sigh, "I have at least the sacred memory of it all. Memory is at once stupendously merciful and pathetically bitter. To possess only a beautiful memory of your mother seems merciful to me, little girl, for there was naught to mutilate the exquisiteness of our pure friendship. But to have her pass out of this life into the next, after all those years of silent devotion, without once having the divine privilege of touching her sweet lips or hearing one loving word from the depths of her heart,—is—is Hell."

Gladys rose and bent over the iron-gray haired man whose slight but military bearing was no less attractive than the clear gray eyes and the ruddy complexion. Softly she touched her lips to the high forehead and whispered:

"I am certain mother is close to us both now. Surely she loved you; how could she help it?"

He shook his head and sighed.

"Goodbye, little girl," and he held the extended hand for a moment. "If you can't find time to run down to my office, just drop me a line now and again."

"Thank you, I will."

And Gladys left her friend to his memories.

Raymond Hallaway returned to his room late the

same evening overly tired. His arms were laden with reference books. His manner was more brusk than usual. He was unresponsive to the loving greetings of Gladys, and did not notice the baby. The young mother made allowances for her lover's shortcomings, attributing his state of mind to the proper cause. She determined, however, to assist him financially by renting smaller quarters in a less pretentious section of Louisville where she could do light housekeeping, and support herself and their child by filling orders for hand painted fans, birthday tokens, and small water colors. She determined to sell her mother's fine old walnut and mahogany furniture. There were four-poster beds of Colonial design, and several Chippendale chairs. Among other pieces were cabinets, old clocks, chests, dressers, mirrors, halltrees, oil paintings, and several valuable massive walnut dining room pieces. This would net sufficient money for Raymond's remaining month in school and the time required to search for a suitable home. Gladys ventured into Raymond's room to relate her plans and the day's revelations, expecting sympathy and co-operation. Instead, he received her coldly and treated her information with indifference. Greatly as his attitude provoked her, Gladys still trusted him. Even when he torturingly insinuated that he had suspected her late mother's poverty for months, the poor girl was too hurt for resentment. He even remarked that not having any business ability her mother's only shrewd stroke was when she forced him to place his future happiness at the mercy of her daughter by compelling

him to relate an incident in his life which the daughter need never have known.

"Do you mean that later you would have married me and never explained about Stella?"

"I think so. Are you any better off today for the knowing?"

"I surely am."

"You are not, unless you call the satisfying of your morbid curiosity being better off."

"Raymond, you are too worried this evening to treat me with civil respect. I'm not going to remain in your room and be insulted."

"Get out of it then I didn't call you up here. This is a place to study and not to gossip."

Hallaway commenced to arrange papers on his desk and otherwise ignore her. Gladys, crimson with mortification, went silently down stairs to assist Dora in the delayed preparation of dinner. Half an hour later Hallaway joined her. Gladys was too deeply grieved to be entertaining but, with a forgiving spirit, served him the larger and better portions of the meal.

"I suppose you think me a cur for the way I spoke tonight but sometimes you get on my nerves with your dreams and impossible propositions, until I go almost mad," he resumed.

"There is nothing 'impossible' about selling the furniture or moving into a cheaper neighborhood; and furthermore I expect to carry out my 'dreams' as you kindly put it," she replied.

"That's right—now nag," he roared.

"Well Raymond, don't you expect me to utter a

word in defense of myself? If you do not treat me fairly, there is no recourse but self-preservation."

"If you move out of this locality you go alone,—do your hear?" and he banged his napkin ring on the solid mahogany table with a vengance.

"Won't you go with me and let me economize in two small rooms, or possibly three?" she entreated.

"Why should I? To move is your pleasure and your own personal prerogative. There is no reason in the world why you can't live where it best pleases you."

"Raymond, are you ill, dear?"

"Ill!" he flashed back. "Not sick in body, but sick at heart,—possibly sick of everything."

"What do you mean?" cried the wounded woman so loudly that it awakened the baby.

"Simply what I have said. I can't see how your proposition concerns me in the least. I'll rent a room near the College, and run over to see you both when my studies permit."

He continued eating, oblivious to her tears. Suddenly the baby cried louder than before, which added to Raymond's irritability.

"Won't you stop that youngster's noise? I can't stand to hear brats cry from morning until night."

Brats! Brats! The hideous name pierced her mother heart.

"She is only frightened at our loud voices," and Gladys took the trembling baby, holding it lovingly as she hummed softly from an old melody. She gradually regained her self-control. She felt the sting but

tried to reason and think possibly he would desire more of her company if it were less easy to obtain.

"Just as you please about it, Raymond. I won't urge you any more, for I feel so lacking in self-respect when I do; but somehow, every time I look into the baby's beautiful eyes, there creeps over me, as it were, a—a—a wife's prerogative, and then suddenly I remember that we—that we are not legally married."

Hallaway failed to answer, and the silence added humiliation to her injured feelings. Gladys felt that the only way she could assist Raymond, was to carry out her plans. Unselfishness and trust were paramount in her every thought. At bedtime, Raymond failed to give the baby or Gladys their goodnight kiss. Inwardly crushed, but outwardly ignoring his thoughtlessness, Gladys and the little one quietly retired.

On the day of the auction, Hallaway was busy with examinations, so Gladys, assisted by Samuel, Dora and the shrill-voiced auctioneer, sold piece after piece of the Longworth furniture. She exhibited a fortitude most unexpected, considering the curiosity seekers, her extreme sensitiveness, and sorrow at parting with relics held almost sacred by her family for so many years. Her dignity and well assumed strength covered the burning shame and her bitter sense of injustice. Just the slightest evidence of emotion evinced itself in softly falling tears as a few of the most precious ornaments were carted away. Especially was her sorrow manifest when she marked "sold" on the red ticket attached to the mahogany hall-clock which had never failed to hum its long, deep, slow "tick-tock" as far

back as she could remember. Glady's parents had told her that it was customary for Colonel Longworth to pull the heavy brass winding chains of this same old clock once every seven days, long before he ever dreamed of there being a little daughter.

She could recall, watching her father, every Sunday evening, winding the old timepiece. After the Colonel's death his attractive widow assumed the almost sacred duty, to keep the old clock ever singing its soothing refrain:

"Live-long! live-long! live-long!"

When Mrs. Longworth also passed out, the winding of the old family heirloom fell to the daughter. Reverently Gladys touched her lips to the wooden knob which she knew the patient fingers of her parents had clasped as they opened the long glass door. She lifted the baby in her arms and pressed one tiny palm against the knob just where her lips had been and then whispered to the cooing infant about its proud grandparents as though the baby could comprehend the mother's pathetic secret.

From the sales, after all expenses had been paid, including payment for Sam and Dora there was realized about eight hundred dollars,—a mere pittance compared with the original value. A few days later Gladys found one very large room for light housekeeping, where air and sunshine were plentiful. There were two closets, a lovely bay window with an eastern exposure, and everything about the room was clean and neat. That night Gladys wrote all about her ex-

periences of the last few days to Judge Breckenridge. The Judge answered her letter immediately and in this manner a correspondence started between the two, which gave her a sense of a fatherly protection. Gladys did not reveal to Hallaway the amount of money she had received, but told him to keep her share of his school allowance for himself and use it for clothes and other necessities.

Hallaway seemed relieved but failed to show his appreciation. His attitude vexed Gladys greatly. However, he did say he would come over to see the baby at least once a week though he refused to leave the neighborhood of the College to room or board. As to the girl-mother's belief in Hallaway's promises to Mrs. Longworth,—well, faith like hers never acknowledges defeat until shocked by positive evidence.

Finally Raymond Hallaway became a full-fledged M. D. For eight months following his graduation he had taken an additional course in "Eye, Ear, Nose and Throat." This made it imperative that he pursue an internship of another year or two in his chosen specialty, at the Holman Hospital near the College grounds. Gladys was convinced by her lover's arguments that "general practice" was a dog's life for any doctor, and unselfishly urged him to "specialize," although it postponed her dream of "home" indefinitely.

As the months wore on, Hallaway's visits to Gladys and the baby were few indeed. He seemingly became colder toward Gladys and less concerned about the winning ways of their little daughter.

There had been no particular Christian name selected for the baby, because the magnanimous law-makers of the State refused to permit a child the right of the father's last name until after a legal ceremony had been performed.

Gladys resorted to every self-respecting subterfuge to regain Doctor Hallaway's attention but with disheartening results. In a final and desperate effort she spent a portion of her little bank account for a smartly tailored gown with hat, gloves and boots to harmonize in the soft shades of brown,—most becoming to her type of blonde beauty. It was Gladys' earnest desire that Raymond should see her attired as in old days. She had begun to understand that the garments a woman wears (especially the manner in which she wears them) are the framework about her physical being which fascinates or wearies a man of Hallaway's tpye. Gladys had failed in this because her private purse did not do justice to her refined taste.

At last came one of the appointed days when Doctor Hallaway had promised his sweetheart and baby a visit. Anticipating the pleasant surprise she could give him Gladys left the little one in charge of Mrs. Allen, another roomer, and, attired in her new outfit, went to meet the Doctor on the campus. The day was glorious. All nature was jubilant in its virgin loveliness. The birds, flowers and trees breathed a symphony of Spring.

There were several women,—wives, sisters and sweethearts, loitering about the main Hospital en-

trance so Gladys stepped back into the shadow of one of the pillars. Several men filed out, both students and physicians, who were doing special work or internships. After a few moments, most of the women she noticed had found those whom they were seeking and had left. In the last group was Raymond Hallaway. Gladys yearned to call but feared his criticism. There was one other woman—a young, dashing brunette—who saw him too. She appeared to have eyes for no one but the Doctor. Gladys tried to stifle the suspicion which crept uppermost in her heart. She knew no other woman would have the right to make surreptitious appointments with the father of her little baby. Trembling, the wounded girl dragged herself further behind the large stone pillar. Revolting thoughts passed through her mind as she watched the maneuvers of the other woman to attract the Doctor's attention.

Gladys never had pictured her lover acting with the least duplicity. He, the man who had so minutely given her dying mother a clear record of his miserable past, and who made sacred promises for the future of both daughter and infant,—it could never be. Yet, here he was, evidently trying to break away from his fellow interns, at the same time glancing eagerly about as though expecting to meet some one by special appointment.

Suddenly Raymond discovered the little brunette, and smiled in a manner Gladys had not seen since his former devotion to her. Sick at heart, she stood alone in the shadow. It was painfully plain that a meeting had

been arranged previously. Gladys could hear her lover's deep rich voice as he greeted the dimpled stranger and see him draw her gloved hand through his arm with an air of ownership.

"Did you wait long, Betty?" and his face was dangerously close to "Betty's" as her full lips formed a saucy answer.

"Not a bit too long when I thought for whom I was waiting." Then she laughed a merry, bird-like laugh that pierced the wounded heart of the girl-mother.

Doctor Hallaway drew "Betty" closer, and snuggled her small gloved hand within his own. For a moment they stood thus, chatting gayly.

"How about the promised walk? Are you too tired, Fairy-Nurse?"

"If I am a Fairy-Nurse, you are a Blarney-Man. But seriously, it would be better to move along. So many of the young physicians and students will recognize me, and I wouldn't enjoy their teasing tomorrow."

"You are right; and they shall not have the chance to tease you if I can prevent it."

The two were coming closer to Gladys' retreat. They would surely discover her, hiding in the shadow. Possibly, the astounded girl deliberated, Raymond would not recognize her, dressed in the new suit. It would be better to walk away quickly as though she had been there only an instant; so she started straightway toward the approaching couple. Control was manifest in every move. A wonderful smile illumined her beautiful features as she came face to face with her guilty lover.

"How do you do, Miss Longworth,—Gladys." Hallaway added her name in a patronizing tone. His self-command was only slightly less evident, as he deftly lifted his hat.

Gladys was proud yet charming in her injured dignity. It seemed to her the lovely dark creature leaning on the arm of the Doctor must surely hear her heart thumping like a trip-hammer. Her knees hit together so rapidly she could scarcely stand. The alluring smile remained and although her voice trembled slightly in its severe tension, a spirit of Southern pride asserted itself.

"Very well, indeed, thank you," and in an instant she had glided past the two with so self-possessed an air as to prompt an admiring remark from Betty and a dumbfounded gaze from the Doctor.

It was all thought out so suddenly and acted on so splendidly that the absence of tears, comment or hysteria caused Raymond Hallaway no little uneasiness. He dared to wonder whether Gladys really came to meet him after all, so adroitly had she concealed the fact. Almost in shame did he crush his doubt of the beautiful woman whom he knew to be slavishly in love with him, and true as a child in her devotion. For a moment he was sorry he had taken up the post-graduate course and internship, and that he had permitted it to absorb him. But, he argued, Stella not being dead, it was impossible to marry Gladys, anyway, though he knew right well he could have begun establishing a practice which would eventually mean a home for his baby and his wife.

He regretted it was a tendency of the male to be morally weak, and the female to be sentimentally so, since such conditions made the dashing brunette by his side all the more charming. He fully understood that spiritually he and Gladys were as much to each other in one way as they were to the child in another. Even then he tried to excuse his failings as permissible among men, and with a determined shrug of his broad shoulders he walked rapidly on, keeping up a lively conversation to deceive Betty.

The dainty nurse, Betty Walker, continued a merry chatter which gave the Doctor an opportunity to perceive a decided mental and physical contrast between the little butterfly clinging to his arm and the fascinating and lovely woman who had caused within his breast a mingled jealousy and alarm.

After passing Raymond and the nurse, Gladys walked briskly across the campus, entering the front door of the Main College building, going down the long corridor and out the side exit which led to her room by a circuitous route. Raymond knew he had gone too far with his former sweetheart. She would never humble herself to send for him again. If he ever desired to see Gladys it would be necessary for him to go personally and not try to make excuses by letter. The unexpected visit of his baby's mother to the College campus was a turn of affairs he had not anticipated. The happy little nurse was but a passing fancy,—a relaxation from the strenuous hours in the operating room. Further than this the flirtation meant nothing to him. Only the ancient and masculine de-

mand for variety, which makes fools of many otherwise self-respecting men, caused Hallaway temporarily to forget his heart's love.

The Doctor realized he would have to be both tactful and truthful with Gladys. If he did not handle her cautiously she might have him behind the bars for non-support of his child, and prevent the remainder of his special course and internship. He knew neither the faculty nor the Hospital Board would tolerate his experiences or his present unlicensed paternity.

The remainder of the Doctor's walk was one of forced gaiety. He pretended to Betty, though the hours with her were always filled with exceeding happiness, his head had started to ache so severely that he must prove wretchedly stupid.

"What do you suppose caused your headache, Raymond?" Betty inquired solicitously.

"Overwork and brain racking examinations with my post-graduate course and internship," he answered, with an idea of gaining her sympathy.

After sitting in the park for half an hour listening to the twitter of the birds, the patter of the water in the cupid fountain, and the empty chatter of his happy companion, Hallaway suddenly arose.

"Betty, you will have to pardon me today for being such miserable company. I believe I must be going and sleep off this splitting headache. Will you be angry?"

"No indeed, Raymond." Betty dipped a violet scented handkerchief into the cool water of the foun-

tain and, wringing it out, folded it carefully under the rim of the Doctor's new straw hat.

"Thank you dear," Hallaway sighed, with perceptible relief.

"I wish I could be your nurse for the rest of the afternoon and evening, but as I can't, you keep the handkerchief where it will cool your weary head. After resting awhile, I'll return to the Nurses Home alone, and you needn't worry over me one particle."

"You are such a dear, Betty. I'll leave you now, if you'll forgive me."

"Run right along, you half-sick boy," and Betty's large brown eyes frankly met the Doctor's.

"Please don't forget to call me up on Sunday." Hallaway drew the dimpled hand to his lips.

For an instant Betty's soft brown eyes met those of Hallaway; but the afternoon's startling experiences rushed across the Doctor's memory,—and before he could utter further excuses, he made a wild dash toward the humble room of Gladys Longworth and his baby daughter.

CHAPTER VI.

A FEW years before Mrs. Longworth died, while Gladys was away studying art, one of the instructors, Carston Ronning, a man of powerful build, splendid education, and rare geniality paid devoted attention to his fair pupil. Her fellow students teased Gladys about him but she modestly denied knowledge of her teacher's partiality. The few times she accepted the invitations of Professor Ronning to lectures or entertainments had been memorable occasions. There were not more than seven year's difference in their ages and they had many attributes in common.

On that same beautiful Spring afternoon, only a few moments after Gladys had witnessed the duplicity of her lover, while walking briskly toward her room, she suddenly felt a firm grip on her arm. Looking up she beheld a handsome stranger whose cleancut features were wreathed in smiles as he exclaimed:

"My dear Gladys, how do you do!"

For an instant she was frightened. In another moment Gladys recognized her old friend and teacher, and eagerly clasped his extended hand.

"Mr. Ronning! How perfectly lovely to meet you again. I thought you were out West,—possibly a full-fledged ranchman."

"Well, I just came into town yesterday, and have been trying all day to locate you."

"All day?" she repeated.

"Yes, Gladys." Then tenderly. "Are you truly surprised, after my marked attentions to you when you were attending Art school?"

"Just seeing you so unexpectedly, startled me," she answered evasively.

Carston Ronning saw the same expression, well-moulded lines, sweet smile,—and in her well-modulated voice he once more listened to the soothing musical tones which he had dreamed about as he painted in the Rockies. Professor Ronning had gone West because he yearned for artistic atmosphere and rugged scenery. People, unless talented or sympathetic, did not interest him. He felt that the mountains, freedom from conventionality, quiet, and the high altitude, would supply the change he needed.

From his previous years of tutoring and the sales from his brush, he had purchased an attractive ranch in the heart of the mountains where, with his mother and three helpers, he had found an artist's retreat enviable for its magnificent views. After a year of steady work he had learned that the memory of Gladys Longworth's unaffected laughter, her perfect smile and mellow voice had been his silent inspiration in the valleys or on the peaks. The artist's soul in him could find her spirit-smile glowing from the mountain wild flower, or hear her rich musical voice in the ripple of the mountain stream. All nature had meant more to

him. He had learned that love is the greatest factor in displaying intelligence and expression on canvas. His brushes worked faster; his colors blended more harmoniously; and all nature appeared more a part of his artistic self than ever before.

Carston Ronning was an odd mixture, yet a delightful man to meet. He was an optimist and dreamer, yet physical advantages had produced a strong, broad type of man such as one seldom finds in the artist. Being sincerely in love, he decided to test the apparently true to the fullest. He believed his little pupil would develop into womanhood more perfectly rounded if he refrained from speaking of love until he was proof-positive of his own. All his life lacked now was a loving wife to share his happiness and inspire him to greater achievements.

His dear old mother was Ronning's devoted chum, but the comradeship a wife bestows, which a real man yearns for through life, was lacking. There was no one to understand his cravings and ideals. In his rambles he made friends with the birds, squirrels, mountain streams, forests and the flowers. Even they could not always convince the artist soul of him, that nature gave to creatures of their blessed kind the marvelous sense of spiritual life,—the knowledge of the unity in all things, although he knew certain authorities taught such philosophy.

Carston Ronning had become restless and he knew the cure. Unless he had his life completed, and in turn completed the unfinished part of some good woman's life, he could not endure another year on the ranch.

"I went to your old home and found it empty," Carston explained, "but a 'For Sale' sign directed me to the Bank. One of the trustees is a friend and he directed me to your family lawyer, Judge Thomas Breckenridge. I waited two hours in that estimable jurist's reception room, and then made up my mind he must have become glued to some case in court. I asked the elevator boy to direct me to the nearest park. I haven't found the park yet, but I have found the very girl for whom I have been looking."

"I'll direct you to the park. It is so beautiful this afternoon. There are so many lovely places for us to rest while we talk over old times and your achievements."

Most any excuse was better than to take her former teacher and admirer to her temporary home. Above all, she dreaded to have him know about the baby. She was not ashamed of the little one, for Gladys was a loving and conscientious mother, but she disliked to have friends of better days know anything concerning her present predicament.

"Are we close to the park?" he queried.

"Only two squares away," and Gladys pointed in the proper direction.

"Capital idea then," agreed the artist, getting into step. "Now tell me all about yourself, and why you gave up the family home."

"Mother died a year ago last March, and the dear old place, so long in my father's family, passed out of our hands some weeks before her death."

Visions of the last few days spent in the Longworth mansion passed rapidly before Gladys.

"Forgive me for mentioning it. I had no idea of such painful sorrow," Ronning said apologetically.

"Painful sorrow!" murmured the lonely girl-mother, as she considered the peace in death's sweet sleep, in comparison to the torture in a living hades. "There is no pain in death. Death, to me, seems but a gentle transition from one elevation of intelligence to another. In fact, there is no actual death, except in the decayed, illusive, and unresponsive flesh,—at least that is the way some of my nearest friends have satisfactorily explained it to me."

"True, little philosopher," acquiesced the professor, delighted with the thoughts of his former pupil. "What gave you the idea of no pain in death, and no real death at that?"

"Different books I have read; friends with whom I have discussed the question; and partly because of my own conception of everything about Nature,—for instance, the seasons."

"Seasons?" Carston Ronning arched his brows.

"Yes, the seasons of the year," Gladys responded with measured seriousness. "Seeing each year grow more beautiful and more wonderful than the year before, yet *knowing* it is the same atmosphere,—the same universe of which I am in awe year after year,—it is no wonder that the birth and death of the *human being* (which is tremendously more important than the birth and death of the seasons) should so fill me with the

sweet assurance that there is no *real death* in anything. There is just the same *spiritual transition* as experienced by the seasons. After the end of this existence, as we understand it, and the unseen Reaper has gathered His harvest, we surely must awaken in the divine knowledge and fullness of Everlasting Ascension. There is no limit to Intelligence or Spiritual Progression. Just as there is no limitation to the worthy material type too, such as art, music or knowledge. There is no death in Spirit, because Spirit is Divine Mind, Intelligence, Nature; and of course Divine Mind neither decays nor dies, but is Everlasting and Eternal."

"That is quite scientific, if you wish to call it that," declared Ronning.

"I do not wish to name it; to me it is a simple, plain, satisfying Truth. Long ago I received a startling revelation of how I had apparently retarded my mental growth. At that time I bade farewell to ancient creeds and limited dogmas. Instead, I take Nature or Creative Intelligence for my object lesson, not a material flesh illusion. You know *flesh cannot create or limit creation.* It takes *Divine Intelligence* or Nature *to create anything.* Humans can construct from things once created, but they *cannot* create one single thing. Invention, discovery or construction is *not creating* anything.

"Take the tiny wood violet;" continued Gladys, becoming enthusiastic, "some one plucks the delicate blossom, it apparently dies. The next season Nature, or Divine Intelligence, sends forth another violet, and the violet plant lives on season after season. So with

the trees,—though their beauty fade, the material leaves die, but not the Creative Intelligence which is the real Life of the trees. And the trees live on and again adorn their surroundings with renewed evidence of Life Everlasting. Everything worth while is good, and All Good, and all that breathes of Life Everlasting is a monumental evidence of the Creative Genius or God's perfect idea."

Gladys' face was radiant with animation, and her delicate coloring was as alluring as her remarks. To Carston Ronning she was an ideal of beauty and optimism.

"Don't you believe that we humans can create anything?" queried Carston.

"To invent, discover or construct is indicative of mortal talent and material skill; while the *creating* of anything in this Universe from Niagara Falls to the delicate wild flowers, human form, or the mere atom of sand, is alone of God's Divine Genius and Power, and far beyond material or human possibilities."

"Wonderful philosophy," he soliloquized.

They had reached the center of the park where the rest benches edged the main walk. There was one bench a little in the rear of the others, near the artificial lake, where two old willow trees in leafless grace bowed low, displaying the lovely pussy buds of Spring.

"That seems like a comfortable bench. We might sit there," and Ronning gently led Gladys to the seat.

It was a pleasant place to absorb the quiet beauty of the park, and the refreshing breezes of a Southern Spring. Robins chirped near by; locusts sang their

chant; and the welcome sun kissed the earth with warmth and cheer.

"Do you like it here in Louisville?" asked the artist, carelessly placing his arm on the back of the bench.

"I like it because it is my home; but any spot one calls 'home' is sacred, I think."

"What is 'home' to you, dear," and he touched her shoulder ever so gently.

"Home is atmosphere," and Gladys pretended not to notice Ronning's effort to draw her a little closer.

"A mere house—an old homestead—does not constitute 'home' to you, then?"

"No," she reflected, "home is love and truth, and not the material things. "Home" is not the ornaments within, nor the acreage one owns, but things money cannot buy. 'Home' is the love we give and on which we lean; the gentle words we use, and the spirit felt—not seen. The 'home' is what we LIVE it, and comprises mental and moral atmosphere. Don't you think so?"

"Yes, Gladys, I do. But don't you believe a dear little house helps to add harmony to the atmosphere?" A smile danced in Ronning's bright blue eyes.

"From a material sense it certainly adds to one's happiness, of course." She returned the artist's smile with an irresistible pucker of the soft red lips.

"If some one offered you a comfortable home, would you accept it, dear?" he pleaded, taking the shapely hand closest to him, and reaching his arm a little further about her shoulder.

"It would all depend," and Gladys tried to move away, as she recalled the "home" she had so often dreamed about with Raymond and the baby.

"Gladys, my darling, don't be afraid. Surely you must know why I have come back to you. My love for the little girl I knew away at Art school has been tested. Once or twice I wrote to you, but received no answer, dear. A persistent wee voice told me something was wrong, and I could not endure it longer, so I came all the way back to ask you to be my wife. Sweetheart,—sweetheart," he repeated earnestly, "will you?"

"Carston, I wish I knew what to tell you." Her voice was sweet and low,—the voice Ronning could hear whispering responses to his love messages as he wandered over valley and mountain. "It is wrong to give you too much encouragement." Her large blue eyes turned to his with the saddest expression he had ever read in them.

"Gladys," and he pressed her hand under his ruddy palm, "didn't you love me just a little when you were away at School?"

"Please do not ask me." The impossibility of this new happiness was only too vividly beyond her reach.

"I have the right to ask you. Surely you are not married?" His tone was filled with alarm.

"No, no, I am not, and do not suppose marriage will be my privilege." The discouraged girl struggled against the tears seemingly bound to come.

"Then there is no reason in the world why I cannot ask you to be my wife." He leaned toward the tremb-

ling form, lifting her tapering fingers to his lips, as he added: "Dearest, little girl, won't you try to love me? Was I completely mistaken, in the old days?"

Gladys smiled slightly, and a stray tear or two persisted in falling, regardless of her nonchalant effort.

"I used to think," she began timidly, "there was no man quite so lovable as my teacher."

"What do you think now?" and he gazed on her beautiful face with heart-starved yearning.

Gladys was on the verge of giving her anxious wooer a more favorable reply, when suddenly she saw a familiar form, walking rapidly down the gravel path close to the bench she and Carston had chosen.

"How do you do, Miss Longworth," and Raymond Hallaway stood before her with outstretched hand. "I was just going to call on you, but it will be a pleasure to do so this evening, with your permission."

Carston Ronning did not particularly like the Doctor's familiarity. Gladys was visibly embarrassed, as she reluctantly offered the tips of her fingers to the Doctor. Ronning politely moved toward the end of the bench.

"Professor Ronning, this is Dr. Hallaway, an old friend of our family." Gladys could scarcely comprehend how she ever spoke the introduction. Looking frankly at the Doctor, she added: "Professor Ronning was my painting master at school. I believe you once saw his picture, and heard me speak of him."

"Yes,—yes I did,—to be sure. I'm indeed glad to make your acquaintance." Hallaway's manner put all three more at ease.

"Won't you join us, Dr. Hallaway?"

"No, thank you, Professor. All I desire is permission to call on Miss Longworth this evening." Looking directly at Gladys he continued: "May I?"

Neither the voice nor the expression escaped Ronning.

"If you care to,—yes," replied Gladys, indifferently.

"Thank you,—I'll be there at eight." Once more extending his hand to Ronning, and smiling knowingly at Gladys, the Doctor hurried away with the parting shot: "Don't forget to be home, as we have a few things to adjust."

He was gone before the astonished girl could think of an answer.

"Who is that fellow, anyway? He seemed to be worried."

"Oh, he's all right. I've known him for—why, ever since I came home from school. He lived at my mother's in the old home, before she died.

"How did you greet him?" Carston was wondering if Hallaway could have wormed his way into the affections of Gladys.

"As 'Doctor.' He is a physician, taking a post-graduate course in Eye, Ear, Nose and Throat." Gladys tried hard to smile.

"It was certainly an inopportune time. I haven't had my answer, either, by the way."

Gladys considered it inopportune, in more ways than Ronning. She wondered how it would be possible to resent Hallaway's duplicity, when he had found her in

such a dilemma and how she could prove to him her own innocence.

"I can't give you an answer so quickly, dear." Gladys blushed when she uttered the affectionate term. "The sun is going down, and I'll have to return."

Gladys wondered if the baby had been good with Mrs. Allen, the only roomer with whom she had made friends,—a woman of mature years, who knew the truth of Gladys' misfortune, but who wisely kept her own counsel.

"Please don't hurry, darling, until you can give me a little ray of hope. It would be selfish to ask a final decision," he declared.

Gladys dreaded to reject this chance for happiness, yet she felt for the sake of the child—if the Doctor would only play fair—it was her duty to marry her lover, even when her love and respect had shriveled into fear and distrust.

"Carston, this is a matter affecting too many lives to answer immediately. Your mother, you, our friends, —there is much to be considered. Besides, I have one or two confidences to impart to you."

"Darling! My beautiful girl! Your present conscientiousness reminds me so much of the sweet girl-student you always were,—unselfish and considerate. But assure your good self that there is nothing you could tell me which would change my present desires. The past is dead. It is NOW. Now, Gladys, is the time we are to begin living for each other! I want you, dearest,—want you for my wife. I LOVE YOU.

Oh, beloved, how deeply and truly I love you. May I hope, dear, just a wee bit?"

"I guess,—a little,—perhaps." The instant Gladys gave her answer she regretted it; but deep in her wounded heart she yearned for a loyal man's love, and to be called "wife."

"Sweetheart, how happy even that little hope makes me. It gives me the right to show openly my devotion. It grants me the privilege of using every honorable means to win your love."

"Please don't, Carston, I can't stand it. Too much has happened recently, and I am only human. I guess I am weak,—or possibly have all the traits of—"

"Of a pure, sweet woman," interrupted Ronning, defendingly. Then he continued: "I have dreamed of holding you in my arms,—of kissing your soft warm lips. Gladys! Darling! Surely you will not keep the good news away from me a moment after you have decided?" he pleaded, earnestly. "You won't play with my love, will you dear?"

Gladys was trembling. "You won't play with my love, will you dear?" rang in her ears. What was she doing? She couldn't treat others as she had been treated. Carston Ronning must know the truth, and NOW. Instantly a brave woman's heart conquered all vain desires for conquest.

"Your love, dear, is the truest, most unselfish love ever offered me." A choking in her throat made Gladys hesitate. "I respect it too much, Carston, to keep you in needless suspense. As much as I would pride my self on being your wife,—I cannot."

Gladys rose and leaned against the willow tree, covering her face with her hands, trying to hide the shame written there, as the tears trickled between her fingers.

Ronning was by her side in an instant.

"Dearest! Gladys! Let me share the sorrow which is torturing you. I love you! Oh, sweetheart, I love you!"

The heart broken girl motioned not to touch her, and made an effectual effort to control her grief. After a little she looked up into the artist's face.

"Carston, you always have been a splendid man among men to me."

"Then you love me?" he interposed eagerly.

"There could be nothing less than the deepest respect for you,—of that I am certain," she replied, still hesitating.

"And? Sweetheart, please don't keep me in this wretched suspense," he implored.

"Carston, can't you understand?"

"You don't mean that you have no love for me? He rested his hands on her shoulders as he gazed into the depths of her lustrous blue eyes, trying to read his answer.

"Don't ask me dear, I cannot—marry you. Carston! Carston! Can't you understand? I cannot—marry you."

Before the astonished man could comprehend, Gladys rushed past him down the winding path, hidden by budding trees and bushes.

CHAPTER VII.

WHEN Gladys engaged her room she assumed the name of "Mrs. Hall." If closely questioned, she avoided mention of "husband" or "business."

"Your baby has been so good, Mrs. Hall. She is sleeping." The motherly Mrs. Allen softly opened the door for Gladys.

"You are kind, Mrs. Allen, and I hardly know how to thank you,—especially when you refuse to accept money."

"The beautiful country scenes you painted for me are pay enough for months to come. You know paintings are luxuries, not necessities," and the appreciative woman opened the door wider. "You look nervous, Mrs. Hall,—I hope you are not ill."

"Not at all, thank you, but I *am* tired," and Gladys gathered the precious baby in her arms and bade Mrs. Allen goodnight. She hurried to her room where she found Hallaway waiting for her.

"Raymond! You said you were going to call to-night!" The frightened girl laid the sleeping child in its downy bed and with trembling fingers turned the lights higher and lowered the shades. "Do you know it is only six o'clock?"

"I had no intention of waiting until night, but came

directly over after leaving you with your new lover." The Doctor uttered this in jealousy and obviously to vindicate himself. He had been humbled before the Longworth family to the limit of endurance. Since he met Gladys he had been a better man, and save occasional transgressions had in no wise morally fallen.

"Shame! You are only trying a bluff! Or using this petty means of forcing a confession from me concerning something of which I am not guilty. You would like to torture me on account of your own black conscience! There are many so-called 'men' like you. Creatures of your stamp are called 'men' for lack of another name,—and because society condones the crimes of the male! Let a man sin, and he can easily purchase a round-trip ticket back to the good graces of society; but let a woman make the same error, and she finds her ticket good for one way only." Gladys faced Raymond defiantly.

Red with anger, Doctor Hallaway began pacing back and forth. He was perceptibly surprised that Gladys, who of late had been readily subdued by irony, now refused to cringe under his verbal lash. It was the only opportunity he had of pointing to one doubtful act and, he intended to take advantage of her position.

"So you think," sneered Hallaway, "that sitting in the park, with a man's face close to yours means *nothing*?"

"It means nothing of the low construction you place on it," Gladys flung back.

"Has he been purchasing your water colors and

birthday cards, instead of the stores you've been telling me about?" he fairly thundered.

"Never! He knows nothing about me except the good when I was away at school. He was my teacher," she cried.

"It's queer how attentive he acted—for a teacher!" Hallaway continued to pace the floor. "Do you think you can fool me?—That big hulk of a 'teacher' here to 'reminisce' about school days? He was making love to you,—trying to gain the price of your soul."

The Doctor never intended this insult. His desire was to force Gladys into admitting what he believed was the truth concerning Ronning's visit.

"Oh, you coward! You coward! You coward!" cried Gladys, superb in her anger. "Trying to gain the price of my soul! That gift, once so innocently pawned to you for the price of three years of abject misery, has been redeemed. Once it was impulsively pledged as a remnant of what was left of my self-respect when I listened to your soft phrases; and later it was regained,—not by your faithfulness and honor—but by my heart's blood, my reputation, the lost name of my family, and the everlasting disgrace of illegitimacy with which secret murderers in society, brand a helpless babe like mine!" Her voice was clear, distinct, but not raised, in its certainty. "I redeemed my soul through sacrifice, suffering, mortification,—yes, shame and humiliation, and I shall keep it by the right of my womanhood, and my belief in Life Eternal."

"For Heaven's sake, stop!" shouted Hallaway who knew he had gone too far.

"Stop? Never! For many a day I have desired to tell you this." As she continued Gladys unclasped the tight collar of her new suit, baring her shapely throat. Her bosom rose and fell with emotion. "My soul!" she continued, "my soul! There is no one more aware of the pitiless price I paid, than you are, 'Doctor Hallaway.' This poor little baby is the direct result of your miserable conception of 'trust.' Do you hear? You cunning scoundrel! Your affection is a combination of selfishness and pretense,—threadbare pretense. When I saw you with that woman today, at last it dawned on me 'twas fear rather than love, I held for you. I am no longer afraid. I hate you for your very thoughts of duty. I hate you for your lies, your unworthiness, your deception, and your insinuation of a few moments ago. Yes, I hate you! I hate you!" she raged.

The young mother clung frantically to the bed for support. The door to Gladys' room had remained slightly ajar and two figures stood without, almost spellbound, as they listened to the fiery dialogue within.

"Pretty speech! Dramatic oration! Feel better now?" goaded Hallaway.

"This is not a case of temper, but of long-suppressed indigation," she answered sharply.

"Feel better?" he repeated.

"Better!" cried the exasperated woman. "Better, indeed! Nothing would make me feel better than to know that just once, only once I could bring you to a full realization that all your talk to my dying mother

was a part of your life of lies, and brazen conceit. Admitting I was a sentimental fool to listen to your smooth, soft words, you were worse than a beast,—you were a moral coward. Your cowardice is not manifest in your influence over me, for your views broadened me and caused me to see life from a more spiritual standpoint."

"A thousand thanks for your condescension, and the bravery of your polite acknowledgment," he interposed.

"Your cowardice has shown itself *since* the baby came," she continued, ignoring his irony. "You have violated my trust repeatedly; laughed at me when I remonstrated with you; sneered when I mentioned marriage as though I were insane to wish the baby to have her legal rights. You have ignored the fact that you are a father, by your conduct with other women. It would be expecting too much that I should live to see the day when you will make your own moral diagnosis,—a well developed case of conceit and deceit."

"Possibly you think you believe all this. Some day, pray God, you will discover that hysterical persons are comparative strangers to reason, tact, and the great underlying principle of endurance and diplomatic silence. It is conceded by good authorities that females are more easily influenced, between the ages of sixteen to twenty-six, and thirty-eight to fifty, by masterful language, attractive environment, impetuous wooing and hysterical imaginings, than males of the same ages. However, I thought you were the exception.

Your professor-lover doubtless has impressed you with his superiority as an authority."

"He is guiltless of any wrong intentions. He told me only the truth,—a truth I recognized as the love of a self-respecting man; not the kind with which you blinded me as you spoke of false standards and ideals."

"Gladys, there is no ideal too high for attainment. If we do not realize our life's most sacred desires, the fault rests with ourselves."

"Were my acquaintance with you less intimate, I'd begin to believe you actually abided by your beautiful theories."

"I struggle to do so; but there is nothing which more quickly destroys optimism and gentleness, and substitutes pessimism and sarcasm, than some of the unreasonable naggings you served to me on the platter of poor tact, with plenty of hysterical tears as the finishing relish."

"I never intentionally nagged you. Professor Ronning came here expecting to find me the same free, happy, innocent girl he left when he went West. He has come back to tell me of his success and to ask me to—to be his wife."

"What did you tell him?"

"Nothing. I will see him tomorrow, if possible, and then he must know the truth."

Hallaway laughed mockingly.

"So you laugh at an honest man's love, do you? You cad! If the world only knew that your poor little wife was lured into your licentious meshes by your rotten drunken influence, and is now in the madhouse

because a sign, which she had used to advertise her support of your rum-soaked body, fell upon her head—who in the world would respect you? Perhaps, if the people knew the persistency of such vultures as you they could better understand why I have been playing my loathsome part to cover your disgusting selfishness, and trusting to lead you into a respectable future."

"Stop! You she-snake!" shouted Hallaway. "If you were not a woman, I'd choke Hell out of you!" Hallaway moved closer to the bed with fists clenched. "You know you are lying when you say I influenced Stella to marry me. Until I was sober I knew nothing of what was going on. If any influence were used it was exercised on me. My reason for silence was because no one would take a drunkard's word. More than that, she was my wife. God help you if you ever venture to mention that to me again."

"I'm not so easily convinced as my mother," insinuated Gladys.

"No, your mother was a diplomat; while you are a hell cat. I wish you could keep your tongue from wagging at both ends. You doubt me because I'm powerless to marry you until after Stella's death. That is injustice. My weaknesses may be many, but one of them is not a betrayal of your trust. God knows, there is but one woman in the world for me. Answer me, do you intend to marry this Ronning?"

"Marry Professor Ronning? What a question for you to ask. Do you think I could unite my life with his without telling him the miserable truth? Do you think I'd saddle him with the results of your dual life,

when everything he offers me is done openly and honestly? No, of course not. I'm not going to marry Carston Ronning, and furthermore, I told him so today. Tomorrow I will tell him why," and Gladys pointed to the sleeping infant.

"You mentioned in no delicate terms how you hated me. Perhaps—" Raymond Hallaway was about to suggest it would be better for Gladys to reconsider her decision not to marry him.

"You are free so far as any promise to mother or me is concerned. But, Raymond, don't think for a moment because my life is ruined that you can force me to ruin the happiness of another. There is not the slightest desire in my heart to marry you. You are in love with the little brunette, and equally tired of me. Possibly you intend to marry this unsuspecting creature,—but more likely she is simply another plaything in your life. Take her,—poor girl. She has my pity."

"I wouldn't marry her if she were the last woman on earth," and the Doctor snapped his fingers with disdain. "I simply became weary of being nagged,—constantly nagged, but meeting her has no significance."

Gladys choked back the persistent tears.

"I do know this, Betty Walker's life will not be ruined as mine has been if I can prevent it. I also know," she rose and advanced toward the Doctor with warning finger, "I have no intention of marrying you at any time, free or not free. There will be no more Hell brought into my life and no opportunity for you to disgrace the baby. You and I must seek separate

paths. Are you listening? I have come to the conclusion that Hell is not a location but a condition. It is my intention to find a bit of Heaven.

The Doctor shrugged his broad shoulders, and walked across the room to the center table where he leaned against it, the while gazing at Gladys with a half discouraged and half quizzical expression.

"At least," added Gladys with forced indifference, "I will have been true to my honest convictions."

"True to your prejudices," he half moaned. "Oh, Gladys," the Doctor signed meaningly, "it is to be hoped some day you will learn that the measured truths of scorn are truths indeed, but far, far less holy than the sublime lies of pity, love and protection."

"The baby and I will get along without you hereafter, Raymond Hallaway; and we will not need lies of pity, love or protection." Gladys stood like a statute before him.

"Do you mean I am not to see you again, or the baby?"

"Exactly that," replied the determined woman.

"Do you realize the child is mine as well as yours,—and that we have no moral right to separate? Do you forget that spiritually we are one? Are you going to break faith because I was weak for a moment? I may not have shown my devotion as newer friends may do, but my baby girl and her mother are the main thoughts of my life, just the same." Doctor Hallaway moved with an air of ownership toward the bed, but like a flash Gladys stepped between.

"You have had almost three years to prove your de-

votion and you seemingly cared only for favorable impression before my mother. Since then you seemed indifferent whether baby lived or died. Now that I have let you out of my life forever, you shall also go out of hers. You can't play fast and loose with my love any longer."

"You won't work that part of your scheme so smoothly," he fired back. "I will declare publicly this child is mine,—and she *is mine.*"

"How can you prove it if I wish to deny it, and some other man, brave enough to stand by all conditions, will admit the child is his?"

"So that's your game, is it?" Hallaway's lip curled and his eyes fairly blazed vengeance.

"There is no game in protecting my baby from your influence. It seems to me you had better not try further to blacken your reputation for the good of your own future. That baby shall have no shadows cast over her life if I can avoid it. Should I speak to my father's comrades, the finish would place you where Betty Walker, your child, or I need worry no longer concerning your Mormonism."

"If there could be a green-eyed, narrow-minded and snipped-eared woman in this world, she would be you. There is no use arguing with a set-jawed female,—especially the combination of a Lee and a Longworth. I might as well leave you now as later. After all our understandings,—our dreams of happiness,—this is a pitiful ending. Thank God, you will not be my final Judge!" Making one desperate, last attempt to bring

Gladys to a realization of the step she was about to take, the Doctor once more pleaded: "For God's sake, Gladys, be reasonable. Can't you see that deep in my heart I never intended to harm you? I worship you! Darling! Darling! I worship you! Don't you love me,—even for the baby's sake?"

"What kind of a woman do you think I am?" Gladys was unmoved.

"I am just wondering," came the suggestive reply. "One minute I believe you true to the good old promises, and the next you convince me of your unstability."

"Because I sinned once and proved a sentimental fool, does not mean there is not an end to your vicious influence. The end has come. I have seen it approaching for months, but now I know that the truth and the dignity of my womanhood have been asserted."

"Dignity! Hell!" Hallaway jammed his fist on the table. "So you think to desert me will prove your womanhood? You think by sending me away from my child you can prove to the world I failed in my promises? You are no better than I am and it is our duty to remain together for the sake of our child. Most women, in your position would be glad to have the father of their baby feel about the matter as I always have felt. When I chose you for the mother of my child, and the little life came to us,—THAT was the fulfillment of Creative Law. It bound us morally and spiritually as husband and wife. I pity you, Gladys, that your conception of our united responsibility is so impaired. In the dim future, because of your narrow vision, you will be forced to endure long

hours of loneliness and misery. It is then the real truth will assert itself."

"You are painfully conceited! To think you are as good as I am is almost simple!" exclaimed the excited girl-mother. "No man is as good as a good woman!"

"Whew! Did you say *I* was conceited?" The Doctor looked out of the corner of his eye in a half amused manner.

"I am infinitely superior in every way. My body is as pure as a lily,—and fit to become the mother of a good man's child. By your own confession, you led a wild and worthless life until you met Stella Allen. After that, you deadened your few remaining sensibilities by continuous drunken debauches. Since Stella's accident you have studied, but all the while you have borne a fast name,—yes, and you knew this even when my dear mother permitted you to enter the sanctity of our home. Anyway, most men are like beasts, ready to tear the heart's blood from the body of every trusting woman.

"So? Men are like beasts, eh? Well, you fail to perceive in your own sex, wild cats in the form of SHE-DEVILS, with vicious, vindictive, jealous mentalities only falling short of their original wild ancestors because their sharpened tongues are bridled and their claws manicured by the deceits which society, culture, education and vanity provide. Women are more dangerous than the wild cats of the mountains. Of the latter you are forewarned, and know what to do to escape trouble; but with the soft, purring, sharp-clawed, sneaking, human feline—" and Hallaway

lifted both his arms in a gesture which indicated the utter hopelessness of the situation.

"You have met a peculiar species in your time," and Gladys gave the Doctor a withering look.

"Madam, I have!" Hallaway met her gaze unflinchingly.

Gladys lowered her eyes. The arrow had pierced the mark. Whatever humility overcame her effort at retort was closely followed by better logic.

"The world," she began, "through a mistaken double code of social and moral laws, has always expected and demanded a higher standard of moral ethics from women than from men. As a class, women have proven equal to the requirements. The day is near, however, when education and intelligence will treat vice in men with the same social ostracism that it does in women. Women will make this possible. I feel it a privilege accorded me to teach my friends that through sacrifice and motherhood, thrust upon women by the selfishness of male brutes, has been unfolded a tremendous truth about which society has given little thought. When the laws of social intercourse give as much attention to the moral courtesies and rights due women as mothers of the coming generation, as they do to property, breeding of cattle, horses and dogs, the lives of women and children, both male and female, will become practically devoid of misery, regret and loathsome diseases."

"There never will be such a law." The Doctor doubted her prediction as much as he admired her enthusiasm.

"There will be, and women will help make it, too. The women who have suffered from the sins of their grandfathers, fathers and husbands, will see that men are morally punished and socially aborted who are not on an equal physical footing with their daughters."

"It is the women who encourage fast living, and who lionize rich men," interposed the Doctor.

"Yes, a certain class, whom I call women for the want of another name, may cater to infectious, polluted libertines because these men have position or wealth. Another class of women cater to vulgar men because women are fools to vanity and ignorant of the personal risk they run. But, women whose lives have not become corrupt from too much near-aristocracy, and whose education was not completed at a snob finishing school after creeping through the eighth grade, are the REAL WOMEN living to AID and UPLIFT humanity by example and demand. THESE are the mothers and girls who will force the aimless, indecent, monkey-dinner element to eventually lower their heads in shame at their lawless, mugwitted methods. THESE are the mothers and girls who will, through the ballot and respectable living, force the men of loose scruples to cultivate more self-respect and to value clean blood in order to share the stimulating society of honorable and beautiful women who are constantly striving for an equal standard of moral ethics."

"That is a good subject for intelligent discussion," was Hallaway's rejoinder. "However, it isn't becom-

ing to gentlewomen to rant publicly on these questions."

"I don't see why women should not speak openly in defense of their rights as men do of theirs." Gladys drew her beautiful body to its full stately height.

"You wouldn't have dared to associate such methods with the gentle modesty of your mother or grandmother."

"No," replied Gladys, anxious to convince Raymond how sacrifice and suffering had changed her views, "it was because of the false modesty of our Puritanical traditions that we had forced on us a double code of moral ethics. Had our gentle mothers and grandmothers dared to speak the truth or been educated along broader lines, our present generation would have been healthier because purer blood would have flowed in our veins, and blindness and congenital deformities would have been less by eighty per cent."

"You are interesting, and I'm pleased you are reading live subjects. But, Gladys, do you truly mean you desire to give me up?" Hallaway advanced toward the door. "That you consider me unworthy?"

"I am weary of argument; in the name of goodness, go. Do you hear? GO!"

With an expression which indicated his fight was far from finished, and with a sweeping glance toward the baby, Raymond Hallaway threw wide open the door. The light from Gladys' room flooded the dark hallway, exposing two forms stationed there.

"Good evening, Doctor Hallaway," and Carston Ronning smiled courteously as the two men passed each other in the doorway.

"Good evening, Doctor Hallaway," echoed Mrs. Allen as she followed Ronning into the room the Doctor had just left.

The Doctor glared at the two intruders but failed to respond to their salutations and hurried out of hearing.

"I think I'll get the little one's night clothes, take her again to my room, and prepare her for bed," said Mrs. Allen. "You look tired, Mrs. Hall, and this gentleman has been waiting some time for a word with you." Mrs. Allen gathered the chubby baby girl in her motherly arms and softly closed the door behind her. Gladys and Professor Ronning listened for the familiar sound of the lower door to close behind the Doctor as he passed out into the night.

"Gladys,—my darling, forgive me, but I could not help hearing and I was afraid you might be in need of protection." Ronning came close to the side of the trembling woman who never appeared more beautiful or dependent than at that moment.

"You heard?—All?" she asked in a half dazed manner.

"Yes, dear, I heard all. I love you more because of the brave attitude you have taken. Please, Gladys, reconsider your answer."

"Tell me, Carston, how did you find me?"

"After recovering from the shock of your leaving me I realized there must be some deplorable trouble and followed you. Gladys, now that I know all, can't

you— — won't you change your answer?" he pleaded.

"Impossible, Carston. Your love has come too late. The whole course of my life is altered, and others must not be burdened with my cross, nor shall I invite further trouble for the—baby."

"I could love your baby, dear girl. Surely I am broad enough," he argued, "to understand your youth, your beauty and impulses, especially since meeting Doctor Hallaway, and listening to him."

"Please do not talk any more tonight, Carston. I am about worn out. Won't you come tomorrow at this hour? We can talk it over." She looked appealingly at the artist.

"Anything you say, dear. I love you too much, and truly, to be selfish with you. May I see the baby?"

Gladys was thankful for an excuse to leave the room and relax.

"Mrs. Allen," Gladys called softly as she tapped on the former's bedroom door.

"Yes, dear," responded a kind voice from within.

"May I please have my baby to show Professor Ronning before he leaves? He is going now."

"Certainly, Mrs. Hall. The dumplin' looks so lovely as she sleeps. Her golden curls are matted fetchingly against her warm cheeks," and Mrs. Allen laid the precious burden in the young mother's arms. "It's plain to me that you are a good girl."

Tears filled Gladys' eyes as she lifted her face to kiss her faithful woman friend goodnight. She then carried the little one to her room.

"My baby, Carston," and there standing before the artist was the Madonna of his dreams. To him there was no picture of the Mother Mary to compare with this sublime vision in the flesh. Gladys chose a rocker, where she rested the curly head against her breast, and feasted her eyes on the dimpled innocent. Professor Ronning continued to stand silent in wonder and admiration, fearful lest he spoil the spirituality of the picture. A chubby pink hand reached out in a restless manner for space. Reverently the artist knelt before this shrine and softly kissed the tiny warm palm which he clasped lightly within his own.

"Little girl-mother, may I hope some day to protect you both?"

"I cannot give you a final answer tonight, Carston. It is impossible to say what I am going to do until I've had at least a night's sleep." Gladys rose and carried the baby to its trundle bed. Professor Ronning followed hopefully and assisted the modern Madonna as she tucked the coverlet about the child. Impulsively he caught both her hands within his own.

"I yearn to kiss you, Gladys, but I won't until I can call you 'mine' and have the right. May I surely come for your reply tomorrow?"

"Yes, tomorrow at this same hour," and Gladys smiled wearily as she withdrew her hands.

"You have convinced me of your love, Carston. Goodbye, just for tonight."

Goodbye, dearest and bravest."

She closed the door quietly, and exhausted, leaned against the inner side bewildered by the revelations of the last few hours.

CHAPTER VIII

JUDGE Thomas Breckenridge reached his office exceptionally early to make final preparations prior to leaving Louisville to hear a case down state. Gladys arrived about the same time, around eight A. M.

"Are you in a hurry, Judge Breckenridge?" Her worried expression was quickly changed to one of relief as she listened to the lawyer's kind welcome.

"I am delighted, and never in too much of a hurry to assist the daughter of your mother." The Judge's face was wreathed in smiles as he clasped the hand of his client. "Now what can I do for you?" He swung about in the swivel chair facing his desk, ready for business.

"I want a few questions answered," she began, "but do not know how to ask them. It would have been more business like had I made notes."

"If it were possible to answer without your asking, I would." Once more the swivel chair right-faced, and he looked Gladys frankly in the eye. "I, too, have a few inquiries to make, when you have finished. For weeks I wanted to see you but work has interfered. Now out with your troubles."

"Do you think," Gladys commenced hesitatingly, "if

I refuse to marry Raymond Hallaway, after becoming indifferent to him, I would be doing a moral injury to my child?"

"Do you love Doctor Hallaway, even a little bit?" Judge Breckenbridge eyed the young mother kindly.

"He killed it with his seeming indifference and ugly disposition,—and he met another woman."

"Even the thought of love for the baby's sake causes no emotion?" the lawyer questioned.

"I don't think so,—not now. It is more for the baby's welfare than my own that I feel it wrong to endow Doctor Hallaway with the legal power to father the child."

Gladys had her mother's expression. As she talked of the future of her baby, Mrs. Longworth's fair face appeared more and more vividly before the Judge.

"Then it certainly would be an injustice to all concerned if you married Raymond Hallaway." After a moment's hesitation he continued: "Is there any one else in whom you are particularly interested?"

"Not with whom I am in love, if that is what you mean," Gladys replied, somewhat puzzled. "There is a young man, a former teacher of painting, who seems to be in love with me, and who asked my hand even after he understood about the baby."

"Did you tell him about the baby of your own volition?"

"No," hesitatingly, "he overheard the entire conversation when I was sending the Doctor away. It was after this Professor Ronning insisted he desired me for his wife."

"Do you care for him sufficiently to marry him?"

The fine military bearing of Judge Breckenridge caused Gladys to wonder how her mother could have resisted him. He was not of massive build, but rather medium frame and straight as an arrow. Even as the Judge sat back in the swivel chair, waiting for his client's answer, there was a proud reserve about him.

"I yearn only for a home," said Gladys, "a spot where I can live and be protected, and where I can have baby fathered."

"I understand your wants, Gladys. Even after bitter experiences you do not fully grasp the impulses of men,—particularly young men," he sighed.

"Do you think because he is young his present opinions might change?" she asked innocently.

"Emphatically, yes. Men are only educated beasts at best. One young man," he continued philosophically, "has the conceit of ten older men, and when enraged he is likely to lay the cause of his troubles on innocent victims. I don't say this man—what's his name?"

"Ronning,—Professor Carston Ronning," she answered with considerable pride.

"I don't say this Professor Ronning has a mean disposition, for I know nothing about him, but he is young, and youth becomes easily distressed and irritated when yokes are thrust about its neck. Youth loves conquest and despises the fetters of restriction." For a moment the Judge hesitated so his listener might grasp the truth. "What does Ronning do for a living. and where does he reside?"

"Well,—he is an artist—a painter of mountain scenery, and previously was instructor in oil and water colors. He has purchased a ranch out West in the mountains, where he lives with his mother."

"Yes?" The Judge was deeply interested.

"Indeed, it must be a wonderful country. Gladys gazed out of the open window in a half dreamy fashion.

"When he came back to ask you to be his wife, did he know that you have a child?"

"No,—not until he overheard, and before I could tell him about her."

"You mean?"

"Why, my baby," and Gladys met his inquiry with mother pride.

"Yes, yes, of course. I quite forgot the baby is a girl. So, Ronning is an artist?", the Judge mused half aloud, the while running the point of a pencil through his thick iron-grey hair. "Do you know that real artists—like an instructor and painter of mountain scenery must be—are very temperamental, impulsive, emotional and even moody?"

"Do you mean what would please him today might be far from his desires tomorrow?"

"Exactly, dear. He is young and dreams, no doubt, of painting the great success of his life. He is artistic, —likely temperamental. Persons of too temperamental a disposition are often too emotinoal to make agreeable life partners. Artists are loving only when the sweet passion of sentiment sways them. The artistic of either sex can live on dreams, write poetry, or

juggle the arts and expect you to share their bread and water diet with equanimity. Geniuses, like Professor Ronning must be in his youthful generosity, seldom turn out lasting or consistent husbands. Now, he added kindly, "I am not saying all this to prevent you from accepting this offer of marriage, but unless you feel you can love him under the stress of an artist's temperament, I wouldn't advise you to take such a step, particularly for the sake of the baby."

"I cannot say I love him. In fact I do not,—but I do respect him because he has always shown himself to be a gentleman."

"Wouldn't any man of good breeding and sense be a gentleman?"

"Yes, I suppose so,—only—only—"

"Only your hungry little heart is convinced that Professor Ronning's romantic and brave impulse is the lasting type of solid sentiment. It may be, dear, but I would rather accept a proposal from a man of seasoned experience who knows from years of yearning and regret just what he desires most in life. Then I should also wish to know him intimately."

"Thank you, dear friend, for your splendid advice. Guess I'll keep right on coloring postcards and painting water colors to make a home for baby and me alone." Gladys arose and expressed her gratitude.

"I have not yet finished, my child; you quite forget, I, too, had a few questions to ask," and he motioned her to the chair she had just vacated.

"Oh, pardon me; how selfish."

"Please do not feel I criticised this young chap. I was discussing the impulses of youth,—especially the dreamy, artistic fellow who is more positive of his likes at twenty or thirty than ten men of fifty would dare to be. For example, you have had your affair with Doctor Hallaway. As honest as he once seemed to be, see what a poor opinion you have of him now. Here is this artist who yesterday did not know about your motherhood, who today says he wishes both the baby and you. No doubt he is sincere today but might have serious regrets tomorrow. I tell you, little girl, youth—male youth—reminds me of March winds,—unreliable."

"I was reluctant to accept my own judgment, and yearned for some one to tell me plain facts. Anyway, I refused Professor Ronning's offer yesterday afternoon, and practically refused him again last night."

"Did you?" Judge Breckenridge smiled broadly.

"It has been my one wish to rear my daughter in some atmosphere other than a rooming house," and Gladys made an ineffectual effort to withdraw her hand, which the Judge had continued to hold. With her attempt at release the clasp was tightened.

"I know it is; your good mother would have desired it. Will you listen to a plan?" he ventured.

"Indeed, yes."

"For fifty years I have lived practically alone," he began. "Save the love I gave your dear mother, no other affection has entered my life."

Gladys was wondering whether the Judge intended to found some kind of institution for the friendless.

"Dozens of times," he continued in well modulated tones, "I have yearned for a home, but no ideal I could conceive would be just what I hungered for because the woman I most desired could not be a part of the picture. Now, little girl, I can't display the fire and jealous spasms of love some of the younger men have shown. I can bestow however everlasting loyalty and enduring consideration on you and the baby. These qualifications may be placed beside any man's offer for cold comparison. I loved your mother, and will be true to her kin. I will protect you both, and be as tender to you as any man can be. It's a home we both hunger for, and now why not make this home together, and live the remainder of our lives for the baby?"

"Have you thought what such a step might mean to you?" asked Gladys in amazement. She knew the unsullied reputation and proud Southern name of the man before her, and was dazed at his suggestion.

"For months this question has been considered until I rather felt that you should receive the message by telepathy," and a kindly smile spread over the Judge's honest face.

"We do not love each other,—only respect," and her voice was sweet and low with embarrassment.

"Respect is one of the purest forms of love. Without respect one can never truly love," the jurist replied.

"We could—I could keep house for you with propriety at least, even if we—if—we did not associate

much." The girl was too bewildered to voice her thoughts.

"'Keep house' is not the term, dear. We must be married and LIVE under the same roof, and with the baby make it a REAL HOME. There would be no constrained relations between us."

"Oh," gasped Gladys. "Oh!" she repeated, blushing prettily as visions of sunshine, home, laughter and happiness passed rapidly before her mind's eye.

"You are too young to live without tenderness and attention; while I am along in years, and crave too truly for the real type of home and children to make my few remaining years a Hell by chafing under the bonds of a cold business marriage. A marriage such as ours would be an unending blessing to three needy souls. We are starving for love and home. You and I can give to each other the full satisfaction of a pure and perfect union."

"You truly respect me—knowing—knowing all?" Gladys cried, almost hysterical with joy.

"Respect you! Why woman, are you so stunted that one repented or regretted act would cause you to lower your head in shame for the rest of your life? Remember, it is not so much the sin, as it is how the sin lowers you and impairs your self-respect that counts. It is how you profit by the bitter experience of your sins which prove whether or not you have had sufficient punishment. Some of our greatest men and women would be unknown today were it not for the pain of a mistake tingling their sensibilities, creating a desire for different surroundings, and awakening am-

bition. After the tears of repentance—following error —are wiped away by honest determination, we can become saints of humility, students of patience, and respected citizens. I am NOT condoning sin; far from it,—but I do desire to prove to you that it is wicked to remain in an atmosphere of remorse after we have once discovered our error. It is a crime to darken your future because of a bitter mistake. Men have sinned a hundred times more than you and still society embraces them for their wit, talents, or for their tainted money. Why should society pet the beast and ignore the suffering ewe?"

"I wonder if I am awake." Tears dropped on Gladys' flushed cheeks. "This seems too good to be true," she added.

"It seems beyond my greatest hopes too, dear; but neither one of us is sleeping. We are living in an age of progress. Equal justice, moral equality, and higher education are coming before your time is finished. I may not live to see this Elysium, but you and the baby will. I am far from a saint. How then dare I demand a state of saintliness I cannot give? A real MAN will be grateful for, but not demand, that which he has not its equivalent to offer. If you had ten children born out of wedlock, at least you are not the sneaking abortionist and murderer of your unborn babes that many married women have been, because their sins are covered by the protecting mantle of the marriage sacrament. "Yes," the Judge repeated earnestly, "if you had ten children born out of wedlock, you are not the diseased criminal that the wealthy

social lion of the hour is, who, year after year frequents the brothel one night and calls on innocent daughters of selfishly ambitious parents the next.

"No, Gladys, I will take you on an equal footing and feel honored that you stoop to my level."

"You? Honored? I cannot burden any one with my misfortunes. It would lower you professionally, and bring discredit to your good family name."

"Is it no credit to be as sacrificing a mother as you have been?" the Judge asked.

"I have tried to prove worthy of my baby, and be a good mother, but there has been little to encourage me and only hopes. Until now, nothing appeared substantial or plausible."

"Have you forsaken all your friends of the old days?"

"Yes," she sighed, "I dreaded to see their tell-tale faces, or let them see mine."

"You need not dread it any longer, believe me. I will stand by you, with your consent, and the very life we lead and the attitude we assume will soon convince some of the gossips they must bow with honor to the little girl, who, like the Magdalene of old, suffered much and was scorned. Yet later, Magdalene became strong and spiritually beautiful in her redeemed life."

"It seems to me that you understand the philosophy of living and how to let live, better than—"

"Better than younger men, dear? Now, Gladys Longworth, I want you to come right down to a final answer. Even without the pet names and the dreams of mountain scenery, will you accept my worldly goods

and call them yours? May I rush over and get the license now?"

Possibly another girl might have lowered her eyes and made a pretense at timidly accepting, but not so Gladys Longworth. Her surprise was genuine, and her answer rang equally true.

"Worldly goods! License! Now? Do you honestly mean right this minute?" Her countenance beamed with unaffected joy.

"Yes, dear, why not? What is the use of waiting? Today is better than tomorrow, and you can have the rest of this week and next to pack, as I shall not return until two weeks from the coming Monday. I have already left my affairs in such shape that in case of my death, you will receive all I have.

"Judge Breckenridge!" she gasped.

"No, not 'Judge' any more,—just Tom if you please."

"I can't say that, but I can call you a little nickname I've always thought applied particularly to you. In German it is spelled 'T-r-e-u' meaning loyal, and is pronounced as though it were spelled 'T-r-o-y.' I have always called you 'mein lieber Herr Treu,' and that word would be perfectly natural to me. How do you like it 'Treu?' "

"It is too good for me, you lovable girl," and he kissed the hand grown warm within his. "However, if you say 'Treu' is my name for keeps, then it is splendid," and he laughed merrily at their happy beginning. "By the way, you have not told me to go for

the license. Shall I?" He almost whispered the question.

"It might as well be now," and Gladys blushed sweetly as they both rose and stood looking with searching longing into each other's eyes.

"Please God may I always prove worthy of my charge," and the steel grey eyes of the man fairly beamed with joy as he drew the fair face to his, kissing softly and tenderly her warm, trembling lips. "Dear, hungry child, you'll soon be in your own home with your flock. My! Surely you will feel ancient mothering an old fellow like me. In five minutes I'll return," and before Gladys could reply he was gone for the license.

Gladys scarcely had time to realize what was going to happen or what Doctor Hallaway and Professor Ronning would say, before Judge Breckenridge bounded into the office like a school boy, bringing Judge Dibbell, an old friend to tie the knot.

After the introduction the visiting Judge relieved the strain by suggesting the ceremony begin at once, calling in two other lawyers, with offices on the same floor.

Thomas Breckenridge slipped his arm about his smiling bride-to-be and whispered: "Are you willing, dear?"

By way of answer, Gladys laid her hand in his with an air of perfect confidence. Judge Dibbell was very considerate and made his part both impressive and brief. Immediately after congratulations, the visitors left the bride and groom alone.

"Little wife—at last," and the strong arms gathered the beautiful girl within their embrace, while an unseen spirit seemed to bestow a benediction upon the happy scene. "I feel your dear mother is pleased," and once more he kissed his bride.

"Yes, Treu, she must be thankful that baby and I are safe at last," Tears fell softly through the smiles. "I know why my mother did not accept you,—it just came to me."

"Why?" inquired the Judge with surprise.

"Just to leave you for me," she replied timidly.

"I guess you are right, little wife-of-my-heart."

There was dignity and intensity during this feast of love. To Thomas Breckenridge, the sublime passion, so long deprived of expression, soared to exalted heights in portraying the ecstasy of sacred freedom. As for Gladys, the privilege of truly possessing a trusted and esteemed protector appealed to her noblest ideals of womanhood, and at life's most sanctified moment her tortured heart thankfully accepted the joy of at last being cherished with unselfishness and loyalty.

"It almost appals me,—these changes of the last thirty-six hours." Gladys nestled close to the venerable jurist.

"It seems perfectly natural to me. From the time you were a small child I felt, to some extent, it was my duty to look after you. Later, when you become a woman and endured several bitter hardships I was positive if you would only permit I could throw my whole soul into being responsible for baby and you."

His generosity so overwhelmed Gladys that words

of appreciation would not come. Tears fairly rained from her beautiful eyes, until the Judge suddenly realized this kind of honeymoon would never do.

"Tut, tut, little wife! Let me kiss those tears away, and may they never visit you again while I live." Instantly, irresistible smiles appeared in response to his loving efforts. "Now, I am going to be like the rude boy after a fine dinner,—eat and run. Before I forget it, take this." The Judge handed Gladys their marriage certificate and a check for three hundred dollars. "See that our baby is in fine condition for the shock. I'll write you tomorrow and, if it can be arranged, have you take a run down to St. Louis where you can meet me for a few days' wedding trip. All this if I can get another jurist to take my place."

"Oh, that would be lovely. I can leave the baby with Mrs. Allen and—"

"We will ask Mrs. Allen," he unconsciously interrupted, "to keep house for us when we return if it is agreeable. Possibly her income is such she might be delighted."

"That would be splendid. I'll not mention my marriage to any one for the time being, particularly Mrs. Allen, if you please."

"Very well, little wife; suit your own dear self. We must rush now as I have but twenty-five minutes to catch the train."

As they walked rapidly along, Gladys wondered whether the joy in her heart was visible in the smiles which she suppressed with difficulty.

"Here is the car, Gladys,—wife." Judge Brecken-

ridge kissed the trembling lips. "Heaven is just begun:—*our* heaven is just begun. When we meet next time I will have a ring or two for you. Au revoir, brave little wife. Thank God, you are mine." He pressed the responsive hand within both of his.

"Goodbye, my Treu,—goodbye."

After the surface car had turned the corner into another street, the happy bride walked slowly toward her room with the satisfying assurance that wifehood brings.

CHAPTER IX.

MRS. Allen was playing "Bean porridge hot and bean porridge cold" with the baby whose peals of laughter were distinctly heard by Gladys as she ascended the stairs. There was a sense of satisfaction as the young mother reasoned that within a month the baby would have a lovely spacious yard, and the cares of both Mrs. Allen and herself would be few, indeed. The happy bride found two letters. The supreme joy of the morning made such a matter as correspondence appear insignificant compared to dreams and aspirations of the mother-heart for the future of her baby. Gladys tore open the letter in Doctor Hallaway's familiar handwriting, and read:—

Dear Gladys: Yes, more than that. You are and always will be, my hope, my strength, my soul's one love, and life itself to me. Forgive me if at any time I have done wrong or hurt your sensitive heart. You stunned me completely when you sent me from you last night. For the sake of the baby, the love I feel for you, and the love you surely hold for me as the father of your child and your first love, let me be to you now, what I have always promised to be. The time has come when I can prove all things. Stella died this morning at 6:15. Will you keep your promise, dear?

I have selected my location here in Louisville, and we can be married any minute. My internship expires the tenth of June; possibly you prefer to wait until after that date. It is my desire to begin fair and square. I want you for my own legal wife, as you have always been spiritually. There is also a father's natural desire to

possess his own little daughter. I worship you, Gladys, and can hardly wait until you answer.

The eleventh of June sounds good for the ceremony. Have everything absolutely quiet so none of the former law relatives hear of it. Secure whomever you please to read the service.

Yours always,

P. S. Address as usual. Raymond.

Gladys leaned back in her chair trembling. Mrs. Allen noticed how pale she had become, and brought a tumbler of water, making eager inquiry.

"This is news that came too late. It is both good and bad. I am powerless, and cannot aid the writer." Gladys endeavored to conceal her nervousness. After a few moments she reached for her scissors and clipped the top edge of the second envelope which contained a letter from Professor Ronning written with unsteady hand on Holman Hospital stationery:

Beloved: Forgive me for not being able to keep my appointment this evening, but last night I became very ill with severe pain in my lower right side. I called in Doctor Crown, and he insisted that an immediate operation was necessary. Am now at the Hospital waiting my turn to use operating room. Feel rather shaky, as I have had nothing to eat since my last evening's meal. Will be conscious by 1:00 P. M. today, so the Doctor says, and he has given me permission to have you sit by me at that hour for a short period. Hope most earnestly you receive this note in time. Will go under the ether with your dear face in mind, and trust to truly see you when I awaken. With my sincerest love,

Faithfully,

Carston.

"So much has happened in my short life, Mrs. Allen, that it wouldn't surprise me very much were I to hear I was to be executed," and Gladys tried to laugh, but it was forced and unnatural.

"My dear, don't laugh so wildly; it isn't like you. Please calm yourself. Do you have to go out this afternoon?," Mrs. Allen asked.

"Indeed, it is rather important that I go for an hour or so, if you will accept payment." Her voice was so forced and suddenly strange that Mrs. Allen decided some future time would be preferable to discuss financial arrangements.

"Just as you say, Mrs. Hall, but your baby is no bother. It is lonesome here without companionship. I have only three living relatives of my own, but I have several law relatives."

"Sometimes too many relatives are a bore; then again they prove themselves a necessary nuisance. I will make some proposition whereby you will always be with baby and me, if you desire. It is impossible to explain now." The bride blushed and smiled at the thought of her secret.

"I should be so happy to live with you. Your courage is admirable, and I love both you and your baby," confessed the older woman, wondering what had happened to cause the peculiar change of expression.

Immediately, Gladys hurried away to Ronning's bedside. As the patient opened his eyes Gladys half commanded:

"Hush, Carston, or they won't permit me to sit here. I promised the Doctor not to say a word to make you talk." Gladys was visibly agitated by the change in the artist's appearance.

"I'll promise to keep perfectly quiet if you'll just say

'Yes.' Everything depends on your answer to my question of last night. I can't wait,—please—please—Gladys—"

Ronning's voice became very faint, and his special nurse bent low as she whispered, gently but fimrly: "Mr. Ronning, if you insist on speaking, against the Doctor's orders, your friend will have to go."

Relieved that she was not compelled to answer the patient's question while he was in such a physical crisis, Gladys glanced approvingly at the nurse, and looked straight into the large brown eyes of Betty Walker. Nurse Betty did not recognize the visitor. After that fatal afternoon's discovery, Gladys could scarcely forget the petite brunette with her dimpled face and baby smile. Both women remained silent. Betty was writing on the history pad, and Gladys continued watching the sufferer's changes of expression.

"I think possibly you better come again tomorrow. He will be stronger then," tactfully suggested the nurse.

"Don't go, Gladys, I'll be dumb," urged the inconsistent patient, trying to smile.

"It is the Doctor's orders, Carston. I must obey for your own good." She took his feverish hands in hers for a moment, wishing she might have the ordeal of her answer over.

"Very well, if the nurse persists in carrying out that order, she doesn't love me, that's all."

The two watchers smiled sympathetically. After all, the artist was like most men when in physical pain,

only a boy at heart and needed tenderness, petting, and not a little flattery.

"Let me introduce you to your nurse, so you will be better friends. Professor Carston Ronning,—Miss Betty Walker," and Gladys glanced at Betty for an instant. Carston's face brightened and his eyes opened wide.

"Will you pardon me, but how did you know my name was 'Betty Walker?' " inquired the nurse.

"Oh, a little bird told me, and I was delighted that you could be 'special' on this particular case, as Professor Ronning is most appreciative of conscientious care," Gladys replied sweetly. "Goodbye, Carston: I will either come tomorrow or you will receive a letter from me," and Gladys withdrew her hand with difficulty.

"Goodbye, my friend; come tomorrow if possible. You know it will be quite necessary to have some one to confide in if my nurse becomes cross."

Betty silenced her patient by laying her cool left hand across his hot forehead, and touching the delicate fingers of the right hand to his parched lips in a half motherly way,—a method Ronning wished she would frequently repeat. If there was one thing more than another acceptable to Carston Ronning, it was being petted when he felt miserable. After Gladys left, the artist relapsed into a much needed sleep, and for several hours his faithful nurse watched and waited.

During the next five days patient and nurse became fast friends, and Carston learned he had to be obedient to Doctor Crown's orders.

"Any mail for me, Miss Betty?"

"Yes, Professor Ronning, one letter which came two or three days ago, but the Doctor thought best to withhold it until today," and the nurse handed him the coveted missive.

My dear and tried Friend:—You were tried, and found "not wanting." You are near and dear, and always will be. It was so pitiful to see you ill today. You looked so lonely until Miss Walker, with her lovely dimpled smile, proved herself capable of being sufficient company. I do not worry over you very much with one of her ability on the case. It appears to me everything should go along smoothly, and I sincerely trust that you will have a speedy recovery, and a future of health and happiness.

Now that you have little Betty nursing you, of whom you have heard Doctor Hallaway and me speak, perhaps you can do a genuine kindness and prevent Doctor Hallaway from too intimate friendship with Betty. Betty is another lovely young flower, and no doubt believes in his fasciating words, and has possibly already lost her head, only later to wither in shame when she comes to realize the insincerity of all unscrupulous men. Save her, Carston! Save her if you can, and as quietly as possible for her dear sake.

As for marriage between you and me,—dear boy, let us forget we ever hoped for that sacrament. It is better for you and better for me. I cannot marry you now, or at any time in the future. My mind is definitely settled on this question, but I always desire your respect and wish to retain your friendship. Please do not urge me or mention this delicate subject between us again.

Although I shall be unable to visit you at the Hospital, any letter you may desire to write will reach me in care of my lawyer, whose address you already have. Am going out of the city by the time you are permitted to receive your mail, to be gone several days. Goodbye, my dear friend. I wish you abundant happiness in the years to come.

Always,

Gladys.

For a few moments Carston lay as one in a stupor. Again he read the letter. Again he closed his eyes. He was bitterly disappointed. Since Gladys had the poor little babe, he thought possibly she understood its requirements better than he. No doubt she had decided to marry the Doctor. All he had left was her sincere request to save Betty. He didn't see how he could go about warning the girl but possibly an opening would present itself. Betty busied herself about the room, then sat down to read to him from his favorite author, Cooper. Ronning only half heard. He was thinking about Gladys and her decision; about Doctor Hallaway and his dual life; about whether it took courage or cowardice to abide by one's unconventional ideals when one practiced them seriously; and about the danger to which dimpled Betty "of the sweet voice and merry laughter" was constantly subjected although oblivious to her peril.

"You are not listening to a word I am reading," and Betty's mouth puckered into an irresistible bow.

"If you twist your lips like that again I'll nip them off and tuck them under my pillow for safe-keeping," and the artist laughed heartily as he watched her embarrassment.

"Are they so funny when I pout?" Betty marked the place in the book before she closed the cover.

"Not funny, but beautiful. Don't let any one ever touch them, Miss Betty, unless you positively know he is truly worthy." Ronning sighed as he remembered the task Gladys had given him.

"I may look a bit frivolous but my lips and kisses

so far, have been beyond reach and price." Betty walked over to the window and looked out on the joint Hospital and College campus with a wistful expression in her large fawn-like brown eyes.

"Don't change your decision, unless you are morally satisfied that the right man has arrived. Even then it might not be such a bad plan to investigate his past a bit before you permit small liberties," and Ronning looked steadily at the lovely brunette as the latter kept her gaze on the campus.

"You would cage a vivacious girl and never permit her an opportunity of selecting her mate, I'm afraid." Betty faced her patient.

"You wrong me. I wish to imply that there are few men as pure as most women. There should be an equal standard, but there isn't,—mainly because match-making parents sell their most precious wares, and society as a whole caters to the blasé. Diseased children are often brought into this world because of the selfish aspirations of relatives,—particularly parents, or the impulsive desires of a girl's vanity and her social ambition. Most mothers will consider their daughters well matched if they marry position, means, and a long family name, no matter how much disease or insanity is hidden in the family closet. An honest, ambitious, pure-blooded farmer would be considered a disgraceful match for the majority of our talented girls; but a half demented, degraded libertine with polished manners and a remnant of a crown on his hollow pate will be wined and dined by our so-called best families, and sought after as a splendid 'catch' for an unsophisti-

cated girl. There is seldom," concluded the artist, "much consideration given to the unborn."

"Are you a champion of eugenics?," asked the nurse.

"Yes, particularly concerning physical and moral proclivities. The mental will take care of itself if there is nothing to impair the moral and physical growth. A stupid person's ambition is lax, his principles limp, because his general health is anæmic. Of course it does not always ring true that because a man's physical health is perfect his mentality is the same. Some of our greatest criminals are superb physical specimens. However, the very least we can will to our offspring is pure blood, perfect health, a clear brain and clean morals."

"You have talked too long now, and I have been guilty of permitting it because every word was interesting." Betty drew the shade and prepared her patient for a short rest. "After you have had a good sleep and some nourishment, I'll read to you."

"Thank you, little boss," and he pressed the dimpled hand as it smoothed the covers.

"Are you comfortable?"

"Not mentally." Ronning looked up with a perceptible sadness in his expression.

"What worries you, Mr. Ronning?"

"You are not angry that I lectured a bit on my pet theory?" He reached for Betty's hand once more.

"Certainly not. It was difficult to realize, but positively true." She pretended not to notice his friendly advances.

"Not angry? Honest?"

"Honest." For an instant Betty looked the picture of seriousness, then all of a sudden her sweet voice rang out in musical trills of bird-like laughter as she clasped his extended fingers.

"I bet you saw my hand all the time,—you-of-the-wonderful voice, only you just wanted to tease me a minute."

"I bet that too. You are only a splendid big boy after all. Everyone needs petting and a bit of teasing once in a while, and it is your turn now."

"You little hypnotist!" Carston Ronning made an effort to draw her hand to his eager lips, but just at the opportune moment, Betty spoiled his gallantry by slipping gracefully away.

"Will you be good now, and sleep awhile?"

"I'll try." Ronning thought it rather unreasonable to expect patients to sleep when there were so many beautiful nurses, like good fairies, fluttering about.

* * * * *

For the fifth time Gladys read her first letter as the wife of Judge Breckenridge, addresed on the outside to Mrs. Hall, for fear of too many explanations. The letter proper, began and was signed just as her yearning soul would have it:

————, Ky.

Little Wife-of-my Heart:—I tried to tell you yesterday how sweet it is to know that I am responsible for your future and the baby's. The fact you are my wife makes me more conscientious in listening to cases, and gives me greater assurance when making a decision. I have at last a LIVING REASON to desire success. You are also wanted and needed by someone who always has cared. This is a great comfort, and stimulates my old bones with youth's ambition. There is nothing I am able to provide but is yours at command.

I shall be finished with this special session of court on Saturday. This is a dull town, and I prefer St. Louis, my next stop, where I want you to join me. Will you leave on the 1:55 P. M. train, Sunday, direct from Louisville to St. Louis via the————R. R.? My train arrives ten minutes later than yours; so I will meet you in the large general waiting room upstairs, as soon as I reach St. Louis.

Have Mrs. Allen care for the baby, and offer her proper compensation for her services. Pack all your belongings so that when we return to Louisville all we shall need to do is to 'phone for an expressman to call for them. We can occupy my present home until you select something more to your liking. The colored housekeeper, who is caring for the house now, has been with me for fifteen years, but we will have room for and need of your friend, Mrs. Allen, too. What say you, dear?

You must notice how devoid this letter is of "gush." The loving terms I may use I mean, and those I yearn to use will come naturally with time. As much as I dream of you by night, and long to have you close to me by day, there is no desire to be selfish for one moment. If you prefer to remain in Louisville and await my return, do so; but it will make me mighty happy to have you alone for a few days in St. Louis. Do not trouble to write or wire, as I am confident my wishes are yours. Will see you as per directions, in upstairs general waiting room. Don't miss the hour, the train or the date, which will get you there early Monday morning.

Holding you close to me, tenderly, truly, I am always

Your loving husband,

"Treu."

Even though it *was* "devoid of gush" there was the ring of truth in every line, and Gladys appreciated being truly *"wanted"* at last. Mrs. Allen was delighted to care for the baby, and accepted the generous salary Gladys offered.

"In case anything should happen to me, Mrs. Allen, —which I hardly think possible—but in case it should, I have a solid gold locket and chain here which I wish kept and given to my baby when she is old enough to appreciate them."

Mrs. Allen turned the locket about several times and at last made out the inscription:

"GLAD RAY

FROM

MOTHER"

"Is the baby's right name 'Ray,' Mrs. Hall?"

"Not exactly. Should anything happen to me, I presume she would fare as well with the name of 'Glad Ray' as any other," and Gladys noticed the mystified look of Mrs. Allen. "Mrs. Allen," confided the younger woman, "I took the first syllable of my first name, 'Gladys,' and the first syllable of her own father's name, 'Raymond,' and conceived the name of 'Glad Ray.' When I marry, my husband must adopt her and give my baby a legal name. Rather than have Doctor Hallaway ever possess her, or even recognize the child in case of my death, I thought for the time being the name of 'Glad Ray' would suffice."

"Thank you for your confidence, my child. It gives me a better chance to defend you and your baby should the day come when any one would make trouble."

"There is nothing of real value in my iron trunk, but I desire my own paintings saved which might be priceless to the baby some day. Will you please see to this for 'Glad Ray' in case anything happens to me?"

"I will, Mrs. Hall."

Gladys kissed the heavily lined forehead of her kind friend.

"May I venture one question?"

"Certainly, Mrs. Allen."

"Do you intend to marry the tall young artist?"

"Positively, no! However, I do intend to announce my marriage in the course of time, but to no one you ever have seen. In the meanwhile protect my baby and know that my heart's blood throbs in her delicate body."

Gladys took the beautiful child in her arms, holding her close to the mother-heart as she kissed the golden curls and innocent mouth again and again.

"What if Doctor Hallaway calls, or demands the baby?" asked Mrs. Allen anxiously.

"I have gone away. You do not know where. This is the truth."

"What if he demands the baby?" she repeated.

"You can tell him that I employed you to care for the child temporarily, and as there is no way he can prove she is his, unless he has either my verbal or written statement to that effect, he cannot touch her."



"GLADYS TOOK THE BEAUTIFUL CHILD IN HER ARMS"

"He may not come near," the older woman suggested.

"Yes, he will; you do not know his persistency. A reply to his letter received this morning which came too late, will bring him here like a raging beast.

"Should he ask me her name, what shall I tell him?"

"Above all things, do not permit him to know I have called her 'Glad Ray.' You can say truthfully she has no name."

"You will have no cause to worry. I have given my promise, and will keep it. 'Glad Ray' will be safe with me; this upon my word of honor."

During the next two days the joyful bride destroyed all articles she did not care to give away. She packed the iron trunk neatly, then placed a note she had written to her child on the top of the tray, carefully pinning it to a bit of lace. Gladys did not know why she had written such a foolish letter. She seemed impelled by a strange force to write and in the missive she poured out her heart, telling the child the secret of her birth. Her desire was to leave an evidence, at least, of a mother's devotion should anything happen to her while she was away.

At last the iron trunk was securely locked, and Mrs. Allen given one of the keys which would reveal the humble legacy and secret of 'Glad Ray's' birth. The other key Gladys kept. Mrs. Allen understood that 'Glad Ray' was not to be given the trunk, neither was she to be permitted to open it, until she was eighteen years of age, and then only in case of her mother's

death. Mrs. Allen made personal notes to this effect. Later, that Saturday night, both women laughed at the precaution. The last duty of Gladys, after listening to 'Glad Ray' lisp her little prayer, and kissing the sleepy eyelids, was to write this farewell letter to Doctor Hallaway:—

> Dear Raymond: Thank you for your proposal of marriage, but after considering seriously our absolute incompatibility of temperament, I beg to refuse your offer. There is no further need of argument either verbally or in writing, as I have given my final answer. You will never know how difficult this has been to decide. In memory of the hours that were, may every hour of the future be one of progress and professional success.
>
> Very truly,
> Gladys Longworth.

The following afternoon, Sunday, just before taking the train for St. Louis, Gladys mailed her letter to the Doctor. It landed in the bottom of the post-box with a thud. Her only hope was that the truth of her words would strike home with like force.

"All aboard," and the colored porter lifted the small step into the Limited's vestibule.

There was a wealth of smiles in the heart of Gladys as she started alone on the first part of her wedding journey. Though she did not possess, at this time, the discretion of more mature years, nor the justice of a more experienced woman, at least there were no regrets,—only a sense of rest and peace as she thought how happy her dear mother would be, could she but see the satisfied wife of loyal Tom Breckenridge.

* * * * *

"Train is several hours behind schedule, Miss," and the weary information clerk sighed as he answered the same question for the fiftieth time. Everybody in the big station appeared to be waiting for the delayed "Limited."

Gladys was becoming more and more nervous as she walked from one large window to another. Every minute seemed an hour. Since she had passed a wakeful night, the station matron suggested Gladys lie down on one of the long benches, where she fell asleep.

"Telegram for Mrs. Thomas Breckenridge," called a shrill-voiced messenger boy.

Several times Gladys vaguely heard the coarse nasal tones. She was not expecting a telegram, and sleep proved a blessing to her weary body.

"Telegram for Mrs. Thomas Breckenridge."

Slowly Gladys opened her eyes as though she had been dreaming.

"I beg your pardon,—the name? Possibly the message is for me." She sat up, half dazed.

Insolently the messenger made a megaphone of his hands, calling in deafening voice: "Telegram for Mrs. Thomas Breckenridge!"

"I'll sign it; it's mine." cried Gladys excitedly.

"T'anks." The boy grabbed the tip Gladys offered him after she had signed his worn receipt book. She read:

"Washout—delayed several hours—Don't worry—positively arrive tonight—Remain waiting room for fear separation—Love.

Treu."

Gladys sighed in relief, and once more made herself comfortable, snuggling under the folds of her traveling coat which she used as a blanket, and was soon asleep.

About eleven-thirty P. M., Thomas Breckenridge rocked slowly back and forth beside his beautiful wife who had not yet awakened.

It was fully an hour before Gladys turned a little, opening her eyes as she changed her position. In astonishment she cried aloud:

"Treu! My own Treu!" Before she could arise Thomas Breckenridge had clasped her in his arms.

"Darling! Little wife! My, but I am glad to see you. Seems like an eternity, doesn't it?" He kissed his bride several times. "Come, let me get your baggage together so we can have a few hours' rest before starting out to see the town."

It did not take Gladys long to arrange her belongings, and soon they were on their way.

"Planters Hotel," and the proud husband assisted his wife into a waiting cab.

"At last we're on the way," she laughed.

"Glad to be with me, dear?" The gallant lover slipped his arm about his young bride as they rode along.

"Too happy for words," Gladys responded as she rested her warm cheek against his and patted his face with a gentle touch so yearned for by the groom.

The following day the Judge called up some old friends—Mr. and Mrs. Fritz Hubert out on Lafayette Avenue—whom he had known for several years and

for whom he had won an important case before he had been appointed Judge. The verdict had meant thousands of dollars to his clients. They were eager to see him again, and to meet Mrs. Breckenridge, insisting the honeymooners come out for at least a week. They had one son whom they had named for the Judge, and this fact influenced the jurist to accept their invitation. After two weeks seeing the sights and taking a few short trips to various towns along the Mississippi, each becoming more and more in love with the other, the happy couple went to the hospitable home of the Huberts. That night the Judge wrote to Louisville to make arrangements for an extended stay. Gladys sent a check for twice the the amount due to Mrs. Allen in payment for her care of "Glad Ray." Each hour was more wonderful to Gladys than the preceding one. She could scarcely imagine such happiness really existed for her poor hungry soul. Thomas Breckenridge became years younger from the joy of being loved. The days passed too rapidly, and time scarcely permitted the lovers to enjoy the complete program they had mapped out for their wedding journey.

CHAPTER X

BETTY dusted and set the room in order as Carston Ronning packed.

"It is the last of June, and six weeks since I entered this Hospital, Miss Betty, and unlike most patients I regret leaving." Ronning glanced up from his packing but Betty continued her work. "Do you ever miss your patients?" The artist sat on the edge of the center table, near the nurse.

"Sometimes" Betty's voice was soft and low.

"Please put down your dust-distributor and tell me whether you will give me a second thought."

"Perhaps," she answered almost in a whisper.

"Haven't our little talks—our spiritual confessions, as it were—made any impression on you, Betty?"

"Please answer some of your own questions. Men are funny. They want to find out everything in a woman's mind, and in exchange tell her just enough to arouse her curiosity." Betty reached for the duster, but her hand was arrested by Ronning's.

"You dimpled kiddy! Now don't be angry because I shook your pinnacle of professional dignity. To me you are two women in one. The most attractive is your dimpled, kiddy self; but a close second is Nurse Betty."

"I'm not angry. Your opinion of me is quite sincere, no doubt; but I would like to be known as someone more attractive than a woman with dimples."

"You are,—you alluring bit of feminine vanity. I suppose you doubt my seriousness. Please remember I said 'alluring,' so surely your anger won't be lasting."

"Do you think all women are vain?" Betty thought she had a right to ask some questions.

"Yes, to a greater or lesser degree, or they would not be attractive." Ronning believed he understood the mysteries of analysés a la feminine.

"Well," Betty remarked, "it must be admitted women are no more given to vanity than men are prone to conceit." Throwing back her head with a comical expression on her pretty round face, she laughed merrily.

"You're correct," he agreed, undaunted by her humor. "Like most women, you are a bundle of charming mystery; but in your case there is added the grace of wit."

"Tut, tut,—you are growing poetical, I'm afraid." Betty tried to withdraw her hand.

"Can't see it that way, Betty," and he kissed the hand respectfully, continuing to hold it firmly.

"Please let me free," she half whispered coaxingly.

"Just let me hold this beautiful parcel of dimples for five minutes. Think of it, Betty, if this appendicitis had not afflicted me suddenly, the privilege might never have been mine. May I ask if you will write to me once in awhile."

Betty smiled at his persistent methods, and wondered

whether he could read in her eyes the joy his request had given her.

"Will you tell me all about the ranch, your paintings, and how you spend your time?"

"Anything you wish. I'd tell you a whole lot right now only you would think me rude or insincere on so short an acquaintance."

The sweet face dimpled as she raised her soft brown eyes to meet his.

"Your advice, and our little talks, have meant too much for me to believe you insincere, but I don't want you to—to—"

"To tell you that I love you until I am more positive. Is that it?"

"Possibly," and the dark silken lashes lowered modestly.

"I won't say I love you, dear. Neither of us wishes to mistake our inclinations for our convictions. I want to know that it is the dimpled kiddy with the loving soul of a woman for whom I have that supreme feeling,—and not the charming nurse and her uniform."

"Yes?" she murmured sweetly, being too timid to venture a more worldly woman's method of leading him on, but praying he would continue.

"Yes, dear, I am thrilled by some subtle force. It is my sincere desire to be convinced,—thoroughly convinced—that the divine love my big heart craves, is not a pity you might feel for a sick patient, that you could possibly mistake for the supreme emotion." Ronning took both of Betty's hands and folded them against his breast with a gentle firmness the nurse

did not resist. "Do you remember the very first long talk we had? I warned you against permitting any man to touch those beautiful lips of yours unless you knew him well enought to love him, and loved him well enough to marry him? Do you remember?"

"I do." Betty tried to move away as she thought possibly Carston Ronning might be testing her firmness and she dare not fail.

"Look at me, Betty. You need not fear. You may even think me a fool, feeling my heart throb as you can, that I do not forcibly steal the delicious kisses we both know it possible to take by brute strength if I desired."

"No, you are not a fool, but thank God you possess the superb strength and self-control of a real man."

"Thank you, sweetheart." He touched his lips to her forehead as he continued. "You have the faith of a trusting child,—a risky attribute to rest in the vicious hands of most men. For that reason I desire to warn you, not bind you."

"Warn me of what?" This in unaffected surprise.

"Against ever going out again with Doctor Raymond Hallaway." His voice was low and serious.

"Raymond Hallaway! How do you know I ever went out with Raymond Hallaway?" Betty's eyes were filled with wonder.

"It is impossible to tell without betraying a sacred trust. This much I can say,—he has a wife in the—Insane Asylum.

"A while ago that might have stunned me, but not now. Two weeks ago I received a letter from Doc-

tor Hallaway, mentioning this early marriage. As difficult as it was, the Doctor thought it due me to write the entire truth. He spoke of his wife's unselfishness, of her teaching, and of his indifferent habits, and about her being insane. He also wrote of a Miss Longworth, a young lady he expected to marry if she would only wait for him until he was free."

"Do you think this was right—to ask any woman to be his promised wife, let alone going about with you, an unsuspecting victim?"

"Truly, Carston—"

"That's right. Call me that."

"Doctor Hallaway always has treated me with consideration. It was no effort for him to be a gentleman with any gentlewoman. More than that, there isn't a man living in his dilemma who would not have asked the woman he worshipped to wait for him. He should have had that first marriage annulled after he once came to his senses. Had he not had so much respect for his wife's unselfishness, and gratitude for her broad views of his errors, he would have investigated the methods used to railroad him into marriage. As for Miss Longworth, he might have waited to ask her hand, but the Doctor is a combination of quick temper, quicker action, strong and steady likes, and equally strong and steady dislikes."

"He never tried to caress you, Betty?"

"Not once has he tried to kiss me. He has kissed my hand, but never my lips."

"You respect him?" pressed Ronning.

"I certainly do; he is a coming man."

"You don't love him, dear?"

"My admiration is for his professional work. There never has been the slightest love in my heart toward him."

"Yet, you have much to learn about men in general."

"No doubt that is true. You wouldn't expect me to know much about men when I never have taken a walk with but two in my life,—they were my father and Doctor Hallaway."

"Thank God for that. All the more reason for me to know I am holding the sweetest and purest of girlhood before me now."

"You will think me silly if I stand here longer," she blushed with the thought.

"Not silly, but most trusting, most beautiful, and truly the most wonderful woman in the world." Again he kissed the dimpled hands.

"Please let me go. Some one might come and find us like this, and things could be made most unpleasant for me."

"Is Hallaway an interne here?" asked Ronning, ignoring her plea.

"He was until this month, but even now, since he has completed his course, he is sufficiently well known around the Hospital to hunt me most any time. He has always preferred me to assist him since he has been doing clinical work."

"Are you anxious to graduate, Betty?"

"It is my desire to keep busy. My father is a min-

ister. With a view to binding pleasure with my work, yet trying to bestow cheer and practical assistance on the poor of his church, I have kept up my studies. There are but two months more before my course is completed."

"You are a splendid nurse and thoughtful little girl. It would be great to be ill all over again in order to have 'Nurse Betty' attend my case."

"Don't you think we had better go?" Betty entreated again.

"Let me take one memento with me, dear, and then we shall go. Will you let me, you wonder girl?"

"You said you wouldn't kiss me, and truly I don't wish you to,—at least not—not yet."

"I am going to keep my promise, sweetheart. Don't ever test another man's self-control or he may fail your trust. Men are only big impulsive boys grown tall. Sweet, lovable women can make fools of the most sedate men. Foolish women can make beasts and selfish cads of otherwise self-respecting men."

"What memento is it you wish? I don't quite understand." Betty was plainly confused.

"Do you think I could have learned to love you in this short while?" Carston Ronning pressed her hands closer against his breast.

"That is for you to know. Seems to me if I felt the real emotion, I would recognize it." Betty's dimples were playing tag with her blushing cheeks.

"Would you, you little temptress? Well, I wish to act with fairness to you, and your parents. After a few weeks' separation, and I feel as now, it will be

my privilege to come and tell you the dear old story. Is there just one little feeling of love for me in your trusting heart, Betty?"

"I'll—I'll—tell you when you come to relate the 'dear old story,'" she answered roguishly.

"You are the sweetest girl I ever knew; and I wish you to remember this hour with the same sacred significance that I shall. Will you, sweetheart?"

Betty nodded.

Carston Ronning slipped his arms about the beautiful nurse before him, and rested her brown curly head on his breast, with her cheek against her folded hands.

"This shall be the memento, dear. A dream wonderful—one that I shall carry away with me. What a privilege to hold in my arms so pure and wonderful a woman. Lift your beautiful face, Betty, that we may feast far into the depths of each other's eyes."

"I'd rather not,—not now,—I'm—I'm almost afraid to trust myself." Betty clung closer to hide her radiant expression. Her honest confession impressed him deeply.

"Trust me, darling. Please, please trust me," he pleaded. "Other women might believe me a fool; but you, with your pure soul, will surely understand I could not betray your confidence."

"Carston, I—"

"Look, Betty. Raise your eyes to mine. Darling, you have my promise,—my word of honor."

Very slowly Betty lifted her sweet face to his. All

the while her dimples were playing havoc with Ronning's resolutions.

"Betty! Betty! I love you!" declared the impetuous artist, drawing her to him in passionate embrace. "Darling, as tempting as this is, I have kept my faith. Will you,—will you try to love me in return?"

He lowered his face close to hers; his lips came dangerously near as he breathed against her hair. It was useless to struggle. Betty really did not wish to move. Now was the greatest moment,—the dream of her womanhood.

"Answer me, Betty." Every fibre in Ronning's massive body throbbed with the intensity of emotion. "Will you try to love me, sweetheart?"

"Come back, Carston, for your answer in two months. Being in your big strong arms and you keeping your word not to kiss my lips, and every syllable you have uttered is—joy to me." Again Betty lowered her smiling face for fear of being too easily won. She yearned to offer her lips, as Carston's passionate love was fully reciprocated. Slowly she withdrew from his caress, and standing before him in her fascinating beauty, she concluded: "I shall count the days, dear, until the two months are over. It will seem like—like a year—until we meet again."

"Thank you, sweetheart. In two months,—say two months from today, I will return to you at your father's home. I'll not count the days, but the minutes."

Ronning tenderly kissed both shapely hands, and with a word or two of warning from the nurse in

regard to following Doctor Crown's prescribed diet for awhile, he reached for his suitcase and was gone. After purchasing a ticket West, Carston Ronning took time to drop this short letter to Gladys in care of Judge Breckenridge as she had directed:—

My dear Gladys:—Before going back West it is due you to state that I have carefully warned Miss Betty Walker, though from other sources she had already been informed of all that was necessary. From Hospital accounts, Doctor Hallaway is a coming man, surgically. It is pathetic that you and he cannot adjust your differences for the sake of the little one.

Miss Betty is an exceptionally fine girl with refined instincts, and from a cultured family. Thank you for introducing me to the young lady, and for you both I took pleasure in fulfilling your wishes.

I am far from a tame lover, Gladys, but since it has been your sincere wish that the mention of marriage between you and me shall be a dead issue, the subject will forever be dismissed.

Miss Betty has given me her promise to cheer my ranch life with some of her merry disposition on paper. It surely is kind of her to waste ink on so humble a fellow!

Now, little pupil,—of memories secret and sacred—I bid you goodbye. May you and your beautiful baby have all the happiness so conscientious a mother deserves. Should you ever need assistance, will you kindly do me the honor of calling for the same from your sincere friend,

Carston Ronning.

For a few moments Carston held the sealed missive as he meditated on the changeableness of human nature. However, he was born an optimist and intended to live life as unselfishly and joyfully as possible. He was a firm believer in the wholesome law of Compensation.

After the letter was mailed Ronning entered the waiting sleeper with a carefree spirit and dreamed of the hours and minutes before he would once more behold fascinating Betty.

CHAPTER XI

JUST as Mrs. Allen feared, Doctor Hallaway had been irritated. The humiliation of being rejected by the mother of his child was enough, but this was nothing compared to the sickening despair as he considered the years of separation from the woman he loved most in life and the torturing probability of some day hearing of her marriage to another. That man would have the legal right to caress Gladys and the baby. He reasoned she had seen only the evil side and judged him accordingly. Having but limited experience with vicissitudes of life, Gladys had been neither tactful nor broad minded, yet Doctor Hallaway believed association, travel and maturity would develop the glorious characteristics he had discovered in her. She was his ideal of womanhood. He adored her virtues, and endured her weaknesses. He had fought fiercely and manfully to overcome his own sins and this made him kinder in measuring the tottering steps of others. Their child had been the living bond which spurred him on. The Doctor realized, if Gladys married another, he would forever remain wretchedly lonely.

After brooding over Gladys' letter for two weeks, Raymond once more called on his former sweetheart. When he arrived at the rooming house the landlady,

Mrs. Windle, told him Mrs. Hall had gone out of the city for an indefinite period, taking everything.

"Did she take the baby with her?" he asked, squinting one eye at the frightened woman.

"Well—er—no, but—"

" 'But' what?" he snapped. "Where is the baby?"

"Mrs. Allen has her," she replied, wondering if the truth would prove best for personal gain.

"Where is Mrs. Allen?" he hissed.

"Upstairs," and glad to shift the Doctor's company, Mrs. Windle escorted him to Mrs. Allen's room.

A firm rap with his umbrella handle, and the door opened. Hallaway deliberately stepped inside.

"Mrs. Allen, I believe," he began suavely. "Ahem, —do you remember me?"

"Indeed, I do," came the unexpected answer as she watched the landlady creeping down the stairs.

"Will you please close the door? I have some very important business to transact with you."

"No, I will not." The resolute woman reached over to a tall chiffonier and with herculean strength banged it solidly against the open door.

"There is no need of such precaution. I assure you."

"I don't know whether there is or not; but I do know that one scream from me will bring ten men from all parts of this house, and I intend to take necessary precautions."

Hallaway noticed the baby playing with her toys in the bay window. The western sun shone on her

beautiful curls and she talked with a birdlike voice to her doll family.

"All I desire is to take my baby for a walk occasionally and to become better acquainted with her."

"You can't take that infant out of my sight,—if that is the one you claim as yours," the excited woman replied as she pointed to "Glad Ray."

"Why certainly I call her mine. Isn't she Mrs. Hall's baby?"

"Yes, it's Mrs. Hall's baby; but you have no proof, have you, that she is yours?"

"I was not aware that written proof was necessary to claim my child,—not after you heard the quarrel between Mrs. Hall and me, which should have convinced you of this child's true parentage."

Mrs. Allen walked slowly over to the center table dividing the distance between "Glad Ray" and Doctor Hallaway.

"Mrs. Hall entrusted the care of her little girl strictly to me for a few weeks, and I am going to perform this duty without assistance from you."

"Do you know, madam, I can resort to law and have you declared unfit to have charge of this little one? If you wish the publicity, just force me to act."

"I wish you would." Mrs. Allen smiled knowingly.

"Possibly you would not enjoy the show," he replied giving a jealous glance in the direction of the innocent cause of discussion.

"I'd enjoy watching the other actor in the show, at least," Mrs. Allen replied, as she commenced rum-

maging for something in a drawer under the table-leaf.

"Whom do you mean?"

"Why you, of course," responded the woman with set lips and a toss of her head.

"How is that?" Hallaway was trying to conceal his anger.

"It so happens," drawled Mrs. Allen exasperatingly, "I know YOU are unfit to assume charge of this baby. I can bring proof of your duplicity in black and white, in photographic form, and in life." She gathered up a few samples of her proof from among the loose papers in the drawer.

"What are you driving at?" Hallaway fired back.

"Oh,—just a mere trifle," rejoined the other airily. "A picture taken on the day you married my niece, Stella Allen; the marriage certificate which was placed in my charge by her father the day I started to trace your whereabouts; and a few other bits of choice evidence."

"Are you—"

"I am Stella Allen," interrupted Mrs. Allen, sister of your wife's father, Frank Allen. Your wife was named after me. The 'Mrs.' has been added to prevent personal questions frequently advanced to old maids for their preference to spinsterhood. I guess you don't recall me at the wedding."

At this moment the landlady revealed her presence by the squeaking of a loose board in the floor at the rear of the upper hall. She had gone down the front stairs, after leaving Hallaway with Mrs. Allen, and

deliberately returned to the second floor by way of the kitchen stairway. The Doctor bounded 'round the corner of the open doorway and caught the crouching listner by the arm, pulling her resisting form before the astonished caretaker of "Glad Ray."

"Tell Mrs. Allen what she just said," thundered Hallaway.

"Please, I can't," pleaded the trembling Judas.

"You lie, you feline; repeat what Mrs. Allen said."

"She said—you could not—recall her—at the wedding."

"That is true," Mrs. Allen insisted, not thinking she was giving evidence against her own relatives. "You were so beastly drunk you didn't know that you were married until some of the guests informed you."

"Do you hear that, Mrs. Windle?" The Doctor addressed the landlady by her proper name, thinking he might need the sneaking female for a star witness.

"I do, sir; but please don't get me mixed in your troubles. My roomers would all leave me if—

"You should have considered that side of the affair before you crept up the back stairs in order to satisfy your sordid appetite on this feast of scandal."

Hallaway pointed to the black iron trunk, which he failed to recognize, and ordered Mrs. Windle to sit on the closed top. Only too glad for an opportunity to rest her shaking limbs, she obeyed.

"Please don't call me into court." She twisted her clawlike fingers about one another in nervous suspense. "Please don't."

"That will depend on the desire for publicity that

Mrs. Allen craves." It was now Doctor Hallaway's turn to feel he had a trifle the better of the argument.

"I have no intention of arguing concerning your physical condition, in court." Mrs. Allen tried to cover the remarks she had unintentionally let slip.

"Your actions and insinuations in the future will settle that once and for all. I do not intend to enter the practice of medicine and surgery with a besmirched name of your kindly donation. By now, Mrs. Allen, you have discovered how unwittingly you revealed the truth about my being railroaded into a marriage with your niece. The words have been spoken, and before this witness, for which I thank you vastly more than I can ever express. Could Mrs. Hall have been a listener, my future would look brighter."

"Your wedding day proved the beginning of tragedy for Stella and all her loved ones." Once more Mrs. Allen endeavored to soften the blistering effect of her former declaration.

"For me, also,—if you will take my word for it, madam."

"Men can live down such affairs," she insinuated.

"Like thousands of others of your sex—incapable judges because of environment and ignorance—you are pathetically one-sided and henningly set-jawed."

"Well," she exclaimed with renewed emphasis, "you KNOW men live down misfortune like this more quickly than women."

"Not, my wise friend, when women of your type peddle their gossipy wares over the earth, relating the follies of a man's youth. I am in much the same

position as the paroled convict, ever ready to receive and ever expecting a downward kick. It burns into my soul with an increasing loathing that one of my sainted mother's sex—you, a self-styled female detective—shouid derive vicious joy from following me about to riddle into atoms my every decent effort by your sugar-tipped serpent's tongue; ready to publish before others of your kind the story of my youthful impulses and tragic failures; but not woman enough to mention the low, cowardly infamy played on my alcohol-steeped senses by your own unscrupulous brother."

"I was unaware of any tricks being played on you."

"Well, there was; and if you spread this bitter memory any further, I will carry it to the highest courts in the land to prove the rottenness of your brother's methods, and to vindicate myself before the only woman I ever truly desired for my life's mate.

"It will go no further, unless Mrs. Windle repeats it," replied the protector of "Glad Ray," with a look of contempt at the landlady.

"Leave this nervous wreck to me. I don't see any reason why this subject should be brought up again. Your niece died recently, which frees me from any obligations to or connection with your family."

"She wasn't dead when you became the father of this baby. She wasn't dead when you lied to Gladys Longworth about an immediate marriage. She wasn't dead when you went courting Betty Walker. She wasn't dead when you registered as 'single' on entering the College, and as an interne. She wasn't dead

when you played fast and loose with a dozen other women since your promised marriage to Miss Longworth."

"If I cared enough about the last of your insult, I'd march you about with me just to prove how expensive your detective work really was. It is sad, indeed, to pay your brother's hard earned saloon-blood-money for idle gossip and lies."

"That is what was told to me. I accepted it in good faith."

"Much you have related is based on fact, but exaggerated to suit the liars' whims and your financial offer."

"Perhaps," she torturingly insinuated.

"Positively. Does Miss Longworth know who you are?" The Doctor drew up a high backed chair and rested his forearms on the top edge of the chair-back, with his hands clasped together.

"No, I never considered it necessary to tell her. She appears quite capable of avoiding a future mixup with any one."

"Thanks for small favors, at least. Are you being paid for your present services as nurse girl?"

"Twice the amount I should receive. Miss Longworth—or as she is known, 'Mrs. Hall'—is exceedingly generous and kind."

"Then you would not consider receiving a small settlement from me that I might take an occasional walk with my own child?"

"Not one cent," she responded indignantly.

"Not if I doubled her offer to you?"

"Not if you gave me five times the amount she is paying. Now we both know where we stand. I feel you care for this child, but my promises were made first to the mother. I am not certain you are the true father, only there are few men who would wish to assume your position unless it were really so. Possibly it would be better for you to leave; it is almost time for the baby to take her nap."

"Madam, it appears to be your prerogative to order me out of your room, but it will be mine to rent the one which was previously Mrs. Hall's. How about it, Mrs. Windle?" He faced the whining hypocrite with a dominating mien.

Grateful for the chance to get into the good graces of the Doctor, as well as to rent the room, Mrs. Windle readily gave her consent. Victory shone in every feature as Doctor Hallaway handed her one week's rent in advance. She did realize the Doctor's object but was appeased with a dollar more than she received from Mrs. Hall. Mrs. Allen was a woman of rather keen perception, and understood Doctor Hallaway's satisfaction in depriving his former sweetheart of her mother-privileges as long as he could,—particularly after Gladys refused his belated offer of marriage. Consternation and fear spread over the heavily lined face of Mrs. Allen, as she fathomed the Doctor's intrigue. With him so near, she was at a loss to know just what step would be best to take.

CHAPTER XII

"WUXTRA. WUXTRA!"

"All about the St. Louis Tornado." "Three Hundred People Killed."

"Wuxtra. Wuxtra!"

Slumbering peacefully, dreaming mayhap of worlds and worlds of other babies just like her own sweet self, little Glad Ray knew nothing of this nation thrilling event destined to sadden the hearts of those so near and dear to her.

"Wuxtra, Wuxtra," came the strident call. Otherwise quiet thoroughfares of Louisville became storm centers of wildly excited multitudes seizing the latest editions of the newspapers as they came hot from the presses. Hysterical women fought with men for the precious parcels of newsprint. Causality lists were scanned eagerly by the half crazed mobs. Now and then a wild sob would pierce the heart of scores who knew another message of death had struck home. Many of this generation will recall the terrible holocoust in northern Missouri when hundreds of lives were blotted out and more than a thousand men, women and children maimed in the historic tornado that swept the Mississippi valley.

The day had been extremely hot. St. Louis had sweltered in the unusual heat of early summer. So op-

pressive was the atmosphere, it seemed omnious. Just as the workers were beginning to pour out of the great buildings the sky darkened. A fitful breeze brought relief to joyous crowds. Then that gripping stillness! Pedestrians paused in alarm. In an instant day was turned into blackest night. Street lights glimmered. The crowds rushed on jostling,—almost fighting. Gusts of wind, knife like in sharpness, shrieked around corners. Here and there a signboard fell. Out of the nowhere came that threatening roar, increasing in intensity. The crowds fled to cover. Any shelter sufficed. The storm broke, smashing, crashing fearless in it's grandeur. Surface cars stopped, crews and passengers scurrying before the gale. Down came telephone poles with their tangled wires. Flying dust and debris added to the murky darkness. Now a crash of broken glass as a show window smashed, then a shrill scream as the Wild Wind, club in hand, beat down struggling humanity. The suddeness and intensity of the storm paralized the great city and left the down town section a mass of wreckage.

It will be recalled that the tornado had but caressed St. Louis in passing, doing its greatest damage on Jefferson, Lafayette, Chateua and Mississippi avenues. Houses were lifted off their foundations, appartment buildings unroofed, trees uprooted and the streets filled with a mass of ruins that broke into flames. Firemen were blocked and rescuers fought their way through the flying debris in response to the cries of the injured. The flames spread. All hope seemed to have been abandoned. For fully fifteen-

minutes the Wind King held sway ruling with a cruel hand. Evidently satisfied with the havoc wrought, Angry Nature opened the flood gates. Sheets of water deluged the streets, poured into cellars and rushed madly on to the river. For hours the down pour continued while police, firemen and volunteers worked in the blinding rain to save life and bring first aid to the maimed. The hospitals were filled to overflowing. Mansions were turned into missions of mercy.

Stunned, but conscious of immediate need, St. Louis was awakening. The work was organized. Leaders were appointed and the great volunteer army began to function. Like a beaten batallion rallying at the very moment of defeat, St. Louis sprung to it's feet and faced the greatest battle of it's history. Before the wires were flooded with news of the disaster and other cities had specials on the way the citizen army of relief restored order. It is a way St. Louis has. Just as victory seemed complete, stories of death and destruction came from down the valley. The rushing waters had swept bridges away, overturned trains, washed out fertile fields and carried hundreds down the river on the tops of their wooden shacks. All kinds of water craft put out on the Father of Waters to survey the scene and plan a new campaign of relief. Accurate death lists could not be prepared, and for days the city and adjoining towns were held in suspense. So the news reports ran in Louisville papers.

"Wuxtra. Wuxtra!"

Again and again came that stirring cry. All

Louisville was in turmoil. Mrs. Allen, Glad's guardian, had been scanning edition after edition of the extras for news of Gladys. She knew she was in the storm bound area, and frantic with fear tried valiently to get a message of inquiry over the wires. It was hopeless. Believing that Gladys had been killed she began to fear for her precious charge. What if the Doctor should know of the fatality and try to seize Glad Ray? Panic stricken by this new fear the poor woman considered and dismissed a score of plans for flight.

Gladys had written Mrs. Allen twice a week and the last letter the older woman received was about the time Judge and Mrs. Breckenridge were to visit the Fritz Huberts, and dated two days before the tornado. The happy bride mentioned extending her visit for another month. She stated she was to spend a few days with old friends of her family living out on Lafayette Avenue, but gave neither their name nor a definite address.

Since Gladys had failed to menion under what name she was traveling, or where she could be located in case of emergency, or even to disclose the object of her trip, Mrs. Allen was frantic. Glad Ray contracted whooping-cough and had two convulsions. Her troubles reached a climax when Doctor Hallaway moved into the room adjoining. As a physician. Raymond forced his services on Mrs. Allen one evening when Glad Ray became critically ill. He had heard the excited woman calling for a doctor. In her desire to give the child immediate relief, Mrs. Allen per-

mitted him to prescribe. The treatment was successful. After the Doctor had made several visits to his baby's bedside she began, with loving trust and innocence, to hold out her arms to be taken. He taught her to call him "Papa," much against the wishes of her caretaker. Each day Mrs. Allen could see the love developing into a devotion which filled her heart with apprehension. In the course of time the landlady, Mrs. Windle, added to Mrs. Allen's suspicions by becoming friendly with the physician. She was afraid to leave her room without taking the baby with her. Fear, lest the Doctor steal the child as the latter slept or played in the bay window, kept the caretaker's nerves at high tension. Every creepy sound during the night, or effort on Mrs. Windle's part to become solicitious as to Glad Ray's care increased Mrs. Allen's anxiety.

But Gladys Longworth Breckenridge was sublimely oblivious of Doctor Hallaway's change of address, or that her baby was ill. So long as she wrote regularly and kept Mrs. Allen plentifully supplied with money, Gladys felt further detailed correspondence on her wedding journey was unnecessary. Judge Breckenridge shared the views of his wife and thought keeping too closely in touch with Louisville was almost desecration.

"Mrs. Allen, where is this child's mother?" inquired the Doctor during one of his morning visits to "Glad Ray."

"I did not ask Mrs. Hall where she was going or why.

"Have you no idea?"

"If I had, no one would find it out."

"It might be to your future advantage if you treated me with a little more respect."

"I have little for you. Your sarcasm, when you spoke to Mrs. Hall, has about killed what I might have had."

"Don't you believe it possible to be so unstrung from too much study and responsibility, that I could forget myself and say many things I would regret?"

"That is possible."

"If you were a broader minded woman, it would be easy for you to assist this little one's mother to see things from a different view-point. Gladys is a wonderful woman,—beautiful and sensitive,—but she is easily discouraged and as easily influenced. Do you think her finances are going to hold out very much longer?" He spoke with calculating slowness.

"Her money may not last, but her friendship will, and I guess I can attend to the financial end of it if she suffers from lack of funds," and Mrs. Allen's grey eyes snapped. "If there is one thing more than another in which I feel a pride, it is in keeping my word, especially during a crisis when many women might weaken."

"You are very loyal to Gladys, and I would like to have you realize that I am her friend,—her very best and nearest friend. It would give me joy to substitute another term for 'friend.'"

Mrs. Allen smiled at the thought of Gladys being sufficiently courageous to dismiss the Doctor.

"By the way," the Doctor continued, "I forgot to tell you my location is picked out right here in Louisville. Father is ready and anxious to back me, owing to my post-graduate standings and Hospital record. The new home I have rented is not a mansion, but I hope to satisfy Gladys that it will be a haven for us three." The Doctor touched his lips reverently to his little daughter's forehead as he day-dreamed for a moment.

"I am sure I couldn't tell you whether Gladys will jump at the opportunity or not."

"She may refuse, but the baby won't."

"Don't try to take the baby from me, or some one or more of us may not live to tell the tale. I gave my word to Mrs. Hall to protect her little one from just such a misfortune."

"Calm yourself. There will be no shooting. If Gladys refuses to share my home, when she returns from her mysterious trip, then there will be time enough to talk about revolvers. I love the mother of my child, probably more than you do. It is my wish to make Gladys my legal wife. She has refused to marry me. It is Hell to think of another man possessing her or fathering my little girl." He kissed the blonde curls so like his former sweetheart's.

"Won't you give me your word not to take the baby from me by stealth, Doctor Hallaway?" begged Mrs. Allen with tears in her eyes.

"If I could, I would; Gladys may reconsider her last letter to me. I will wait until the end of this week before seeking legal light on this question. Rest as-

sured, I will not harm a hair of my little daughter's head."

"That does not lessen my obligation to Mrs. Hall." Mrs. Allen's face was haggard.

"Very true; neither does it lessen my obligation to my own flesh and blood. This is my baby. She belongs to both Gladys and me, and her mother should be willing to play fair. Otherwise—" He drew up his massive shoulders and lowered them again in a maner which warned Mrs. Allen of the impending danger.

"It is quite possible to have this little one taken from me, as I am only the hired nurse, but I will not give her up voluntarily. The mother has my promise and I mean to keep faith. My duty is plain. I will guard this baby while there is breath left in my old body." Tears rolled down the careworn cheeks.

"Don't worry for the present. We will wait until Mrs. Hall writes you or me again," the Doctor assured her.

This was little comfort to Mrs. Allen. There was a look in Doctor Hallaway's eyes she mistrusted. She did not doubt his intention of possessing "Glad Ray" at any cost. Since she felt instinctively that Gladys was already married, she saw only trouble ahead if the child remained longer within its father's reach. The young mother had pinned her trust to the older woman's word of honor, and though the responsibility was appalling, Mrs. Allen did not propose to be found wanting.

"I must leave now," the Doctor concluded, "and

supervise some alterations on the new home. Before going, let us shake hands and consent to share this obligation with a common purpose, at least until we know better how matters truly stand."

Partly because she did not comprehend his real nature and more because she dreaded a scene, Mrs. Allen reluctantly laid her icy fingers for an instant in Doctor Hallaway's warm, hearty grasp.

"I trust everything turns out for the best," she sighed.

"I trust so too," whimpered Mrs. Windle, who was afraid to have an opinion of her own, but who had surreptitiously joined the trio while pretending to polish the door knob.

"All we can do is to hope, Mrs. Allen," rejoined Hallaway, ignoring Mrs. Windle. "Thank you truly for giving the baby such loving care, especially your conscientious nursing all through her recent illness. This mark of your affection has not escaped me. For today, goodbye."

"Good morning, Doctor." Varied emotions prevented her from saying more. However, she was grateful he had noticed her nursing.

"Good morning, Doctor," echoed the she-jaguar.

After kissing "Glad Ray's" velvety cheeks again and again, the Doctor painstakingly instructed her to remain by the window to wave to "papa" after he reached the front gate,—an act of devotion she enjoyed as much as her father.

Days passed and still no letter from Gladys. The papers published a list of the injured and dead, but

there were no familiar names to Mrs. Allen. After many sleepless nights and days of deliberation the problem finally resolved itself into a choice between two solutions—leaving quietly with the child when Doctor Hallaway was not in his room, or remaining and running constant risk of having "Glad Ray" stolen or taken by force. The Doctor was absent almost every afternoon. This gave the baby's guardian plenty of time to pack a trunk with articles necessary for a prolonged stay. She had decided on a vacation until the bride-mother returned. Even after the trunk was ready and all personal arrangements completed, Mrs. Allen waited three days longer for a word from Gladys. She was not alone in her fears, though the causes differed. Doctor Hallaway was equally worried and particularly so over the future guardianship and training of his beautiful little daughter. The greater the Doctor's solicitation, the more positive Mrs. Allen became that it would be against all rules of father-love, for her to think she could retain the child unless she fled quickly.

Mrs. Allen ultimately decided to leave for Pike Lake, Minnesota,—a mere spot on earth, but not on the map, having as its one possession, a Tavern run by a man named Sullivan, a cousin of Frank Allen's wife.

Pike Lake is about seven miles out of Duluth, amid wild, rugged hills and in the pine forests. There hunters, fishermen, artists and writers spend different seasons of the year. The baby's caretaker waited until a certain afternoon when Doctor Hallaway had invited the landlady over to inspect the completed home.

He invited Mrs. Allen but she tactfully refused. Immediately after the two had strolled from view, Mrs. Allen called an expressman and had her trunk—as well as the black iron one belonging to "GladyRay"—delivered purposely to the wrong depot. Later, the same evening, the Doctor came in to bid his little daughter goodnight, and give her a few bright pennies for her bank. First, he played "beanbag" with her until the tiny legs could no longer run and the eyes were too weary to hunt. The Doctor listened in reverent silence to "Now I lay me down to sleep." He kissed the sleepy eyes and baby lips, never dreaming of the years before that privilege once more would be his.

There was a guilty feeling in Mrs. Allen's heart. But she could not protect the little one to the satisfaction of the mother, and have it in constant touch with the father. At ten o'clock the boarding-house was comparatively quiet. The Doctor was sleeping. At ten-fifteen Mrs. Allen pinned a note and the two dollars room rent for the remainder of the week on her dresser cover, she took the precaution to have the money in the form of an express order that she might have a receipt before leaving Louisville. At ten-thirty Mrs. Allen hurriedly dressed the sleeping child and gathered up two handbags which she had earlier in the day slipped under the bed. Softly she crept down the front stairs and out into the night with "Glad Ray" in her arms. It was six blocks to the depot where the trunks had been delivered. After walking rapidly about two blocks a cab came sufficiently close for Mrs.

Allen to signal. In half an hour the two trunks had been transferred and re-checked, Mrs. Allen's ticket and lower berth purchased, and "Glad Ray" with her well-meaning protector were on their way to Pike Lake, a place Doctor Hallaway, Gladys or any-one concerned had never heard mentioned,—at least not by Mrs. Allen.

CHAPTER XIII.

AMONG the homes completely burned to the ground, during the tornado in St. Louis, was the Fritz Hubert mansion where Judge and Mrs. Breckenridge were spending the last portion of their honeymoon. Mrs. Hubert and her oldest son were killed by bricks from a falling chimney. Judge Breckenridge was severely injured by a section of a burning wall which fell on him, following the explosion of a gas tank while he was endeavoring to extinguish a fire. He had carried his frightened bride out of the suffocating, blinding smoke, and immediately returned to aid a member of the Hubert family when the accident occurred. He was taken at once to the Mercy Hospital, where Gladys remained constantly in attendance. For three days the jurist's wounds seemed on the mend but on the fourth, he developed a fever followed by pneumonia. At the end of the fifth day, Judge Thomas Breckenridge passed on, conscious to the last. The final words of the venerable jurist, though spoken with the greatest effort, were an added evidence of faithful devotion to his charming wife.

"Gladys, little wife, everything is left so you will be comfortable for the remainder of your life. It is hard to go; harder yet to—leave you. It must be God's will. The—last six—weeks—have been heaven —to me."

"Treu! My own Treu! Don't speak that way; I can't spare you." Tears fell freely from the swollen eyes, so feverish and full of pain.

"Gladys, you must—live—to care for the baby. Go directly—home to her. There are plenty of funds.—Old Dinah will stay—with you—for my sake. You'll have Mrs. Allen, too. The combination to the vault is in my wallet here,—and money to live on until you receive—the residue. Oh, Gladys,—I love you.—I love you.—Thank God—you are—my wife."

Judge Breckenridge did not speak again, and made no visible struggle against death, which came gently while the young wife knelt beside him. The attending physician and interne lifted the sobbing widow from the side of the unresponsive body and assisted her to another room across the hall. During the day of the fire, Gladys' eyes suffered from the flames and smoke, but the doctors assured her there was greater need of immediate attention to her nerves and general health than to her sight. With smoked glasses and rest she would find the inflammation disappearing rapidly. For almost a week after her husband's demise Gladys waited in the Hospital to gain strength for the return to Louisville. All train and ticket arrangements were made by Fritz Hubert, whose mental anguish was alleviated by lessening the trials of others.

The astounding news of Judge Breckenridge's death reached Louisville some hours before the remains arrived at the Union station. Several prominent men met the widow, offering their assistance. Judge Dib-

bell was one of the first, and insisted on attending to all details and escorting Mrs. Breckenridge to her new home, which she had frequently seen and admired but never before entered. The arrangements for the burial two days later were personally supervised by Judge Dibbell. Dinah promised to stay indefinitely with the new owner and mistress of the Breckenridge home.

Gladys put aside all selfish desires, and did not send for Mrs. Allen and the baby until after the funeral, when the house would once more be in order, and her business affairs adjusted. From worry and tears her eyes became dimmer. A severe cold on her lungs added to her already miserable health. The several hundred people who came to pay their last respects to the late jurist, and those to whom Gladys wrote notes of thanks for their beautiful floral offerings, caused the heartbroken widow extreme mental and physical exhaustion. Gladys had the Judge interred to the left of Colonel Longworth in the Longworth family lot. There was room for five more graves, and in this manner her three dearest departed were together. She placed over her husband's resting place the same type of headstone he had selected for her parents.

For almost five weeks following the funeral, Gladys Longworth Breckenridge was under the care of a nerve specialist. During the early period of his treatment, the Doctor considered visitors at the Breckenridge home dangerous for the welfare of his patient. The days were as years to Gladys, and the loneliness and suspense almost unbearable. She continued to improve in every way except her sight which became

gradually weaker. At last it was decided she might 'phone for Mrs. Allen and "Glad Ray." Little did her advisors dream of the shock in store for the widowed bride.

The telephone operator gave the correct connection.

"Hello?" Mrs. Breckenridge tremblingly called.

"Hello," snapped a feminine voice.

"Is Mrs. Allen in her room, please?"

"Mrs. Allen!" the other responded sharply.

"Yes, Mrs. Allen," answered Gladys in cultured, measured tones as she recognized Mrs. Windle's rasping voice.

"No, Mrs. Allen left about six weeks ago."

"Left? Left for where," cried the mother, now thoroughly alarmed.

"Nobody knows, ma'm. Nobody can find out. Is —"

"This is Mrs. Hall. Rather you once knew me as Mrs. Hall. Where is my baby?" There was a sob in her voice as she excitedly continued to question her former landlady.

"Wish I could tell you. Mrs. Allen went away during the night, leaving only a short note; that's all I know about either your baby or her."

"What did the note say? Please read it to me," begged the lonely, weeping woman.

"I saved it thinking possibly you might wish to know something concerning the whereabouts of your child, and the old hag you hired to protect your interests."

An attempt at irony from the lips of Mrs. Windle

would pass over the head of almost anyone, so Gladys, ignored it.

"Please find the note and read it to me," she pleaded.

"Hold the line for a moment. I think it's in my dresser."

That moment was like an hour to Gladys until Mrs. Windle again spoke over the wire.

"Are you listening, Mrs. Hall?" came the exasperating query.

"Yes, yes—please read," urged Gladys.

"Here it is then:

'Have left more than my room rent. I put it in the form of a money order so as to have receipt. Am afraid of Dr. Hallaway who threatens to steal the baby, so will remain away until I hear through detectives that Mrs. Hall has returned. Then I will restore the baby to it's mother. If I never hear from Mrs. Hall, will keep the child and give her the most loving care. Am going so far away that no one will ever find me. Will not break faith with Mrs. Hall for any soul on earth.

StellaAllen.'

"Will you give that letter to a messenger if I send for it immediately?"

"Certainly, Mrs. Hall."

"Did Mrs. Allen take a black iron trunk?"

"Yes, and she also took such effects as she desired to keep."

"Then I will send for the letter right away."

"Won't you come out to see us, Mrs. Hall?"

"Not for the present, but possibly later, thank you."

"Very well. By the way, did you know that Doctor Hallaway just moved from here, where he previously

rented your former room? He went to live in his beautiful new home, which he remodeled for both residence and office."

"No, I know nothing about Doctor Hallaway," responded Gladys with poorly affected indifference.

"Shall I deliver any message to him? He runs over once or twice a week, hoping I have heard either from you or Mrs. Allen. He surely does love your baby, Mrs. Hall," she added significantly.

"Thank you, but any message I may have for the Doctor, will be delivered in person."

"Goodbye, then, Mrs.—what's-your-name?" Mrs. Windle inquired cunningly.

"Good morning. The messenger will call for the note at once."

In less than two hours an A. D. T. boy handed Gladys Mrs. Allen's letter in which she read the alarming truth, adding mystery and sorrow to her already aching heart. She wondered whether or not Raymond knew more than she, concerning the whereabouts of the baby. She was in serious doubt whether detectives sent out by Mrs. Allen could locate a Mrs. Hall, when there was no such person in existence.

That night Gladys hired two plain clothes men, one to shadow the doctor and the other to search for Mrs. Allen. There were thirty thousand dollars in bonds and insurance ready for the widow to cash at any moment; also five thousand in ready money securely locked in her late husband's vault; several first mortgages from which she could draw interest until the principal would be paid her; and the cottage where she

now resided and called "home." All this naturally caused Gladys to feel that she was financially in a position to find and possess her baby girl. Judge Dibbell directed her business affairs with caution, securing for the widow of his former friend good interest on shrewd investments.

Her greatest alarm came from the positive failing of her sight. After several weeks a thin, pearly white film made its appearance on the surface of both eyes, and large objects seemed dim shadows. Adding to her woes, she was informed by an eye specialist, nothing could be done to relieve her approaching blindness. She was told she would be forced to submit to the progress of the disease until its maturity when only a delicate operation could restore the sight. It was but a vague HOPE of future vision held out to the discouraged patient.

In total darkness, with only Dinah, Judge Dibbell (her counselor) and Miss Weeks—a capable girl the widow employed as escort and social secretary—the cross of Gladys Longworth Breckenridge became heavier and harder to bear. Outwardly she accepted her blindness with smiling serenity, accentuating her lovable disposition and frail beauty.

CHAPTER XIV.

BETTY was the picture of anticipation and joy as she stood at the gate in her dainty lawn gown fastened at the throat with a fluffy lace jabot and pearl sunburst. She was watching and waiting for Carston Ronning. A telegram received earlier in the day stated he would arrive about sunset. It was two months almost to the hour since she last saw the artist.

"Betty! My Betty!" Ronning eagerly clasped the dimpled hands extended toward him and covered them with kisses. "It is just eighty-six thousand four hundred minutes, Betty," and then he realized they were not alone.

"You great, big boy! So you counted the minutes too, did you?" Betty's full, red lips trembled with emotion.

"Are you glad to see me, dear?" Ronning continued to gaze at the beautiful brunette before him with honest rapture and love written all over his manly face.

"Of course, I am. Are you?" Betty blushed prettily.

"Glad! Well, it's the last time I will remain away two months, or even two days, I can asure you."

Reverend and Mrs. Walker came down the steps to greet their guest. As they joined the happy couple Betty introduced them to the artist she had nursed so

faithfully, and the man they knew she had learned to love. A most sincere welcome was extended. Even Betty's dog, "Gyp," pranced and barked his greeting, finally seating himself at the feet of his young mistress. After dinner, while Betty assisted her mother, and in the twilight Reverend Walker and Carston Ronning strolled about the rose garden, a portion of the well kept grounds around the church and parsonage.

"Our daughter has handed us most of your letters to read, my boy,—so the object of your visit is not unknown. The frank old man motioned to a rustic seat where they could talk. "Mrs. Walker and I feel as though we had been acquainted with you for some time."

"I am conscious of my absolute unworthiness in mentioning this subject, Rev. Walker, but since I have fallen so desperately in love with your daughter, I presume you are the one to hear my proposal and now is the time.

"Yes,—that is right, the time has come. I have dreaded it for years," he sighed. "How long have you known our Betty?" The minister shifted his position in order to meet the honest gaze of his future son-in-law.

"A little more than three months,—but it seems years to me. There is neither act nor look about Betty that I do not love." Ronning made his confession more easily than he anticipated.

"Have you sufficient income to maintain a home?"

the father asked with the natural welfare of his daughter at heart.

"If she is willing to live a wholesome life, full of usefulness, love and kindness,—yes. I own a small ranch worth approximately $40,000. From my brush I average between $4,000 and $5,000 a year. This is not much, but Betty, mother and I can get along nicely and even save a little if she is so inclined."

The father made no comment but asked another question.

"What are your habits, young man?"

"I care nothing for liquor, or tobacco, but love travel, books, pets, hunting and fishing."

"Nothing very dangerous, I am sure."

"No," Carston responded frankly, "but at that I am far from a saint."

"Most men are in the same boat, my son." The white haired man smiled as he recalled his younger days when he had fought many a battle with the ancient and rigid regulations as expounded by the pious members of his congregation. "One more important question: Is your health and that of your parents in a normal condition?"

"My father was drowned while out sailing, but always enjoyed good health. His ancestors were of the old Viking stock, with robust bodies and competent mentalities. My mother has been well until recently. After father's accident, mother worried so much she lost strength, but I guess with tender care the dear old mater will stay with me for many years. If there is one thing more than another over which

father and mother displayed unusual pride, it was the unblemished lives of their ancestors. I am just what I appear to be—a plain, big fellow, with clean blood in my veins, good lungs, and an over amount of ambition to possess Betty for my wife."

"As Betty's father, you do not blame me for being exacting, do you?"

"Not at all, Mr. Walker. I wonder that you can feel any man on earth is good enough for so pure and beautful a girl."

"Well, it is hard,—but Betty is the one to decide, you know. She has already told me her wishes, and —" "Gyp" jumped up to be petted and the sentence was never finished. "It has grown quite dark. However, the moon will soon appear from behind yonder clouds. I think it is time to put "Gyp" in the barn for the night and then call my daughter."

"May I see her alone for a few moments, if you please?"

"Certainly. Been young myself not so very long ago. One relaxes from the daily grind when permitting fond fantasies of youth to linger occasionally. One feels years younger to dream again the sacred and refreshing days when life was free from care. Oh, well," he soliloquized, "it is a worth-while meditation, when one has used his golden hours to good advantage. Try not to remain in the garden too long. The night air at this season is damp. Tomorow you will have another opportunity to chat with Betty. Begin now to take good care of my little girl, will you?"

"As you wish, Mr. Walker, I'll commence tonight to obey—"

"Your new father, eh?" the older man interrupted.

Both men laughed, one with a tinge of sadness that his only child had chosen another nest, and the other blithely because,—he was in love and could not help it.

"As a final injunction, my son, give our daughter the same square deal you hope to receive. Nourish her tenderly, for she is sensitive, and by the grace of God may you be rewarded accordingly."

The old man turned without waiting for an answer and walked sadly toward the house. He had forgotten to put "Gyp" in the barn, and as though endowed with a sense of regret at the loss of his young mistress, the dog hung his head and walked, downcast, by the side of his master. Carston waited expectantly for several minutes before he heard the soft rustle of Betty's gown. The first quarter of the southern moon was throwing her silver beams through the trellises and fragrant shrubbery. Carston arose from the rustic bench and met the white figure, leading her gently to the seat Reverend Walker had vacated.

"Let me always assist you, dearest. My eyes are not only accustomed to these evening shadows, but many of the dark places and pitfalls of life. Do you understand me, Betty?"

"I understand," she almost whispered.

"Betty, dearest! Is it true that we are alone just as we hoped to be, or is this a wonderful dream from which I shall awaken? Carston slipped his arm around her.

"If it is a dream, then I am sharing your charming reverie."

Carston Ronning hesitated for only a moment. The question had been too constantly in his mind to wait longer for an answer.

"Betty, your father seemingly does not object to me. He has left *his* answer to *your* personal choice. I love you more than any woman in the world. Will you—will you accept me for your life partner?"

Betty was silent. The night, the moon, and the odor of roses caused her dream of dreams to become far too perfect and sublime for impulsive response.

"Look at me, darling. Will you promise to be my own little wife, for ever and ever?" Carston held Betty slightly from him to compel her eyes to meet his in the soft glow of the moonlight.

"You hardly need an answer, dear boy, for before God I have been yours since the hour I discovered what it was to love you. I promise to be your own, true wife now and for ever." She looked straight into his eyes as she spoke, and her voice was sweet and alluring.

"Mine? All mine?"

"Yes, Carston, just yours."

"My darling! My own precious Betty!"

Slowly, assuringly, tenderly he drew her dimpled face to his, and touched her responsive lips.

"You dear, dear dream-boy!" whispered Betty.

"My wonderful, mesmeric, baby girl!" and again Ronning feasted on the lusciousness of Betty's full, red

lips, sweeter by far than the nectar from the hearts of the roses about them.

"Is this the way all men kiss their chosen love-mates?" she asked innocently, both surprised and joyous at the ecstasy of the superb emotion.

"I have never seen any other man kiss his betrothed so I cannot tell you, my darling. Do you love these kisses of ours?" As he spoke, every syllable of his rich, manly voice vibrated with controlled passion.

"They are sweetly mysterious, and fulfill the secret craving of my woman-soul."

Carston held Betty from him, then again drew her closer.

"Such kisses, darling! Can you imagine anything nearer perfect? At last our lips have met and are to meet hundreds of times in exquisite union. You are the most beautiful woman in the world to me, Betty,—and the most fascinating."

"I wouldn't seem so lovely, dear, were it not you who draw forth the response from the hidden depths of my soul."

"Yes, dearest, it takes one's right mate; and surely we are properly mated. God bless you, darling, and keep us both true and happy forever."

"I suppose my dear father would say 'Amen' to that little prayer. Instead I am going to LIVE my 'amen.'" Betty snuggled closer.

"You precious, bedimpled kiddy! What a heaven of happiness is this to know, though all other women prove failures, I have one little angel-hypnotist who, with her loving irresistibleness, will fascinate forever."

Ronning slipped a beautiful solitaire on Betty's finger, saying as he did so: "Will you name the day, little sweetheart?"

"Don't you think it is too early to set a day, dear?"

"Not a bit of it," he responded with an air of authority. "Just look at this," and the artist took from his vest pocket his mother's wedding ring. "This ring was used by my dear old dad. Now the mater thinks —and so do I—it would be fine to use it for my wedding." They both laughed as he related the dream of his good old mother.

"How lovely! And would I wear it until—until—"

"Until our—our oldest child would marry. Do you understand, you wonderful Betty."

"How long is the longest, do you think, we should wait to be married?" she asked mischievously pursing her lips..

"Longest?" he exclaimed in dismay. "You mean how soon will be the soonest, don't you?" They both smiled at the phraseology.

"You surely don't mean to—to be—"

"I mean," interupted the impetuous lover, "to have you name the day immediately, and take you West with me for a wedding trip. I am going a roundabout route to the mountains, and want my little wife by my side."

"Oh, Carston, I couldn't think of leaving father and mother so soon," but the dimples belied the regret in her eyes.

"Come! Oh, Betty,—please promise you will go. I simply can't return to the ranch without you this time."

Never since Betty had known him did Carston Ronning's voice sound so persuasive.

"How long do you intend to remain in Louisville, dear?"

"Until Monday. Surely you can pack a suitcase in four days."

"Yes, but I haven't the—proper clothes." It was evident that Betty's desire for a dainty trosseau caused her to hesitate.

"Hang the clothes! Oh, pardon me," he mollified as he noticed the reproachful pout. "If you pucker your lips round and sweet like that again, I won't be able to finish my remarks tonight."

"Isn't my ring beautiful?" she asked appreciatively.

"I hope so, darling; but as I was saying, you don't need a lot of clothes. Just buy a traveling gown, and when we reach Chicago, you can buy out a store if you care to. Betty! Betty, darling! There's no use debating the question. You just have to go home with me."

"Carston, I love you so!"

"Prove it, sweetheart, by having the ceremony Sunday. Will you?"

"If father and mother consent, then I will."

"You are an angel, Betty. I'll ask your parents at breakfast, so you won't have to disturb their rest tonight.

"But if they object,—I'll have to wait, dear. They are so good to me. I couldn't hurt their hearts."

"Don't dash me with cold water. In some manner we should be able to influence them. Let me go to my

room with the thought that the whole world will recognize you as my wife on Sunday just as you truly are my baby-wife tonight."

"Very well, dream-boy,—as you wish."

"Now Betty, I promised your father not to keep you too long in the night air. We must go in, and you to dreamland."

"Won't you also dream, Carston?"

"Haven't been doing much else for the last two months. I'll lull myself to sleep by the symphonic counting of the minutes until our wedding ceremony. I am strong on counting minutes, you know."

"Wasn't it splendid that I was assigned by Doctor Crown to your particular case at the Hospital?" beamed Betty.

"It was God's sublime way of adjusting circumstances; another evidence of compensation's natural law."

"Carston, it is glorious that your professional calling has not sapped the optimism and spirit of youth from you. To me, you seem just what you are,—a talented, honest, big boy."

"That is one of the kindest compliments I ever received. Were I not a big boy, the greatest gift of the artist would be missing. He who has not the combination of childhood and maturer years; who is devoid of sympathy and love for old and young; who has not experienced joys and sorrows; who has neglected to live in the sanctity of nature; who has stinted his life by refusing to see the brighter side, and weave dreams; who has not lived, worked, succeeded, failed and

understood, makes a miserable excuse for the genuine artist. The individual minus these gifts cannot portray his subject without the flare of society, the hypocrisy of 'tinkling cymbals,' many explanations and conspicuous frames. The REAL artist pours out the bigness of his manhood on canvas, and without accompaniment of any kind, gives to those who view his efforts, an instructive share in the divine heritage of his soul."

"That analysis is sufficiently complete, and only goes to show why you are such a splendid lover. It is a heritage with you, indeed, to know exactly why, when and how."

"The dear old mater vows I will love a wife until she pleads for mercy. I can't love you too much or too truly, can I Betty?"

"No, Carston. All women live on love and I am no exception. They grow strong and endure any kind of trials with smiles and grace when they are fed on the glorious stimulent of tender demonstration. Rather than a banquet and a palace with the flimsy assurance some men feed their starved wives on (when they thoughtlessly feel that the wife should know the husband loves her without daily effort of either verbal or moral proof) I would prefer an attic and a crust with unselfishness and loving expression. There is no fear nor doubt where perfect love exists."

"That is so like you, dearest. I promise always to faithfully provide, and never will I forget that woman's chief necessity in life is affection,—and plenty of it too."

"Thank you, Carston."

"Shall we go in, Betty?"

"I think so, dear."

"Then, you darling dimpled kiddy, just one more of those wonderful kisses."

The happy lovers sealed the sacred promise with a depth of sincerity felt by few.

After many arguments Carston and Betty persuaded the girl's parents that an immediate marriage was the only practicable plan, and greatly desired by the lovers. On Saturday, Professor Ronning and Reverend Walker went to the Courthouse for the marriage license. Later they found a florist and ordered the church appropriately decorated. Betty and her mother purchased a simple but beautiful cream satin wedding gown and tulle veil, a becoming traveling suit, and a few minor accessories.

Until late Saturday night, the church was being transformed into a bower of beauty. Sunday morning found at the entrance to each pew a beautiful bouquet of white carnations, ferns and smilax tied with white satin ribbon. Stately palms and hundreds of lilies banked the chancel rail. A soft carpet of velvety green moss covered the base of the altar on which rested two white satin pillows for the bride and groom to kneel upon during the benediction.

There had been no invitations, but over the 'phone Betty has asked several of her friends to be sure to attend church in the morning for "very special services." Among them were former members of her nurse's graduating class and the internes who were in attendance while she was taking her course,—includ-

ing Doctor Hallaway. As nearly every one connected with the Hospital had suspected something of the sort, the church was packed to the doors by ten-thirty. The regular members of the congregation came to the usual Sunday services and could not at first imagine the reason for the magnificent floral garnishment. The organist continued to play the usual music until after the sermon had been preached and time for the taking of the collection had arrived. Instead of the usual offertory, there sounded the opening strains of Lohengrin's Wedding March. Reverend Walker, much to the surprise of the church members, nodded toward the rear of the auditorium, and slowly, with her dimpled face wreathed in smiles, came the bride down the center aisle on the arm of Carston Ronning.

Every head was turned to get a view of Betty whose tiny feet had difficulty in keeping step with the music. Carston was the picture of a happy groom,—his cheeks flushed and his eyes dancing. There was no embarrassment. His massive build gave proof of physical ability to protect the charming girl by his side. When the bride and groom reached the altar, Mrs. Walker arose from one of the front seats and stood just behind her daughter. The deacons were then requested to rise and take their places to the left and right of the young couple. The organist played impressively from Schumann's Traumerei as the simple ceremony proceeded.

With trembling voice and suppressed emotion, the minister-father pronounced them "Husband and Wife,"

and raising his right hand reverently, concluded: "Let us pray."

Carston and Betty knelt together receiving the silent blessing of the bride's mother, benediction of the father, and good wishes of all the people. As they rose the organ sounded forth the Bridal Chorus. The happy pair turned about, and with Betty's father and mother following, walked slowly to the vestry. Mrs. Walker, bride and groom went directly to the parsonage, but the minister turned back to finish his regular Sunday morning service. That afternoon Mr. and Mrs. Carston Ronning quietly received a few friends who called to offer their congratulations.

"Take good care of our little girl," whispered the sorrowing mother as she kissed her son-in-law goodbye just before the train left Louisville.

"I promise to treat her as tenderly as I would a child, never for a moment forgetting the priceless value of your sacrifice," and the artist looked frankly from one to the other as he spoke.

"I believe you, Carston," and the white haired pastor unable to say more, clasped his son-in-law's hand.

"Both of you have been so good and loving to me." Betty's large, brown eyes welled with tears.

"Write frequently, my child. It will be terribly hard on us—this giving you to Carston with so little warning. You are going away to a new country to be surrounded by strange faces. Be considerate, but conservative; be kind to all, but practice the virtue of silence; and pray for proper knowledge through the Grace of God. Feel assured, we will each day ask the Father's

blessing upon you and yours. Never will a morning dawn or an evening close, without our prayers ascending to God for your health, peace and safety."

Betty was too overcome to speak. She clung first to her weeping mother and then to her father, who for his wife's sake was bravely struggling with his grief.

"We better get into the train, little wife."

"Goodbye, dearest souls. Oh, my blessed mother and father!" Once more Betty embraced her parents, after which Carston assisted her into the observation car from which the happy couple watched as long as it was possible to see the minister and his wife.

In about half an hour the sun began to sink and a waiter announced the evening meal in the diner. Carston proposed that they go to their compartment and prepare for their first meal alone.

"Very well, my own, big boy." Betty had difficulty in keeping her balance as they walked through the swaying coaches.

"We are going home, darling. Think of it! We are truly going HOME! Are you pleased, baby-wife?"

"Yes; going home," she murmured.

CHAPTER XV

AS NUMBER 22 slowed down at a way station in Minnesota, Mrs. Allen thrust her towsled head out of a window long enough to sniff the crisp pine laden air, then she bundled Glad Ray in her arms and stepped lightly from the coach to the cinder siding.

While the train crew and a few passengers were ravenously devouring their soft boiled, toast and coffee, the loyal guardian of the precious child of love walked triumphantly along a beaten path, edged by weeds, toward the little freight house. So happy was this faithful woman in the consciousness of unselfish service that the prosaic path seemed a royal highway hedged with roses.

"Free," she murmured. "Glad Ray is free. If the parents never find her no one will know the stigma of her birth unless she tells." The thought that Glad had been given her full rights by an act of Providence, and that she, Mrs. Allen, had been used in the work of the Master to save this little one from a life time of shame seemed to grip her very soul.

Musing over the joys of self appointed motherhood Mrs. Allen reasoned if she were being used as a Messenger of the Father of us all, she need have no fear of her own future or that of the child. Just as an inkling of Truth dawns in human consciousness of woman the serpent begins to speak.

"Why not claim Glad Ray as my very own?" she mused. "No one ever will find us here. I can destroy the letter of her mother, proclaim to my relatives,"—Mrs. Allen may be forgiven for the sinful impulse seemingly inspired by the mother-cry suppressed all through the years. She looked up in alarm. The passengers were hurrying into the coaches. She bolted for the car and noted with apprehension the gravity of the train crew. Even the jolly conductor who had been piloting No. 22 safely over the route for so many years seemed distressed. She observed a crumpled yellow sheet of paper in his hand. Mrs. Allen found her way to her own double seat. Two men across the aisle were talking in whispers. Two women just in the rear were craning their necks to hear the conversation. Unable to restrain her curiosity longer, Mrs. Allen asked the "news butcher" what all the excitement was about.

"Forest Fire," he barked and a man nearby visibly trembled. It was evident to Mrs. Allen there had been a disaster of some kind. A fire meant nothing to her, little realizing the terror the word brings in the great Northwest. Presently the whispered conversation ceased and the train moved forward. The conductor passed through the coach many times, always stopping to look at the sleeping child. He would take off his cap and wipe beads of perspiration from his forehead. This happened so frequently that Mrs. Allen became alarmed.

"What is it all about?", she inquired as he paused on his beat. "Are we in danger?"

"Very grave danger, madam," he said quietly. "I have been unable to get this little girl off my mind." Then realizing he had said too much he began to assure the woman there was no imminent cause for alarm.

Perhaps an occasional reader will recall the conflagration that swept the territory around Hinckley, Minnesota, the same year of the Mississippi Valley tornado. It seems all Nature conspired to rob Glad Ray of her rights; first the cyclone then the forest fire; the two events that shaped the child's future.

As Number 22 roared on, the passengers began to note the increased speed. The fireman, the engineer and the conductor were the only three men on the train who realized the real peril. The crumpled slip of yellow paper Mrs. Allen had seen had electrified the three stalwarts who, at a hurried conference decided to avert a panic by witholding the truth. It seems the fire had been raging for days in scattered areas. Now the whole state seemed aflame. Almost every hour the fire would be reported from a new quarter. Train schedules had been abandoned but thus far there had been no loss of life. Officials of the road had decided to send Number 22 through the territory when reports indicated there was but slight danger. When the train reached the last way station the first definite news or order was received by the crew. The telegram indicated the flames had leaped across the right of way after 22 had passed and were flying on the wings of the wind in hot pursuit. There was no turning back now.

"Go ahead," the message read, "full speed; run thru fire; your only chance."

Officials evidently realized the peril but saw no way of rescuing the ill-fated train. Small fires had been reported in advance of No. 22 but there was a space of cleared land on the other side of Hinckley to afford a temporary shelter. For some time the crew and passengers were detained for orders. For the first time signs of flames were visible ahead. The air was murky but the glaring sun vied with the maddening red screen. One could see in the distance moving mountains of red and black smoke sweeping toward the excited groups.

Anxious passengers had been told to wet blankets for an immergency. They were advised in case of an unexpected outburst of fire to cover the windows, and if it should be necessary to leave the train and wrap the wet blankets around their bodies. The final instructions added to the alarm and women began to grow hysterical. Through it all Mrs. Allen, because of her ignorance of such danger, remained calm. Her only concern was for Glad Ray and she had prepared two dampened blankets for the child should the unexpected happen. Peering from windows the now wildly excited passengers could easily see great clouds of red, black, purple and gray smoke towering to the sky. Now and then a merciless and menacing tongue of red flame shot from the earth to the horizon. Mrs. Allen watched the picture cooly. On and on dashed Number 22, the man at the throttle oblivious to peril while his fireman stoked like one gone mad. Coaches

began to sway, windows and doors rattled, and the train fairly rocking as the strain increased. All speed records were being broken. Children scrambled from parents laps and crying with fear were crushed back to mother's breasts. The confusion grew more and more tense as, wild eyed, the conductor raced through the car toward the engine. The fireman had been overcome. Seizing the shovel from the reddened hands, thrusting the prostrate man aside he began to feed fuel into the hungry furnace. The fire seemed cool to his fevered face as the door opened and closed with resounding regularity. Black with smoke and frightfully burned from the flying embers, the engineer clung to the throttle. All he could see was a few feet of clear track ahead.

Glad Ray enjoyed the confusion immensely. All eyes and attention, she was innocent of all danger. Her smiles and happy exclamations cheered many a terrorized soul. Mrs. Allen was amazed at the child's disregard for the fears of others. She had tried to tuck a wet blanket around the little one's body but Glad refused to be "wetted." She even insisted on caressing a crying little boy who came stumbling by. She gloried in the occassional glimpses of the trees, some ashen, some red.

Fairly bounding from the rails the train roared on, going where,—no man knew. Every moment it seemed, the coaches would leap the grade. Flashes of flame, at first separate and distinct, became a red glare. The heroic engineer, hair and eyebrows singed, face a blackened mass of burns, hands swollen to twice their

normal size sat like one transfixed peering into space. Suddenly he jumped from the seat. "We're riding into hell," he shouted. He threw his full weight on the lever. The brakes screamed high above the roar of the flames. The engine quivered. Only the closed door of the furnace saved the conductor from plunging head first into the fire. "Track blocked ahead," shouted the engineer, as the jamming coaches lurched. Flames were sweeping into the cab from every angle. Finally the train came to a full stop. The heat was terrible. The conductor scrambled over the tender to the first coach. The engineer started to follow. Down came a crashing pine pinning the helpless hero under it's flaming branches. Cursing God, he died.

There had been a rush for the rear of the train. The conductor tried to restore order in the first coach but passengers fought him like maniacs. Seemingly forewarned, Mrs. Allen had bundled Glad Ray into a wet blanket and was half way down the aisle of the last coach when the final crash came. The car she was in and two others had toppled over on the bank carrying men, women and children to their funeral pyre. Mrs. Allen, who had been hurled to the floor, staggered to her feet with Glad still in her arms unharmed. She had at last realized the frightful holocust. Just ahead of her a benevolent gentleman was leading a gray haired woman to the back platform. Turning he saw Mrs. Allen and the baby and stepped aside. Frantic with fear she leaped to the ground while the aged man and his mate calmbored down. In her haste Mrs. Allen had forgotten a hand bag con-

taining her mother's watch and a roll of bills. Thrusting Glad Ray into the arms of the minister she fought her way back into the coach to recover her treasures. Realizing delay meant death, that he could do nothing to aid the others, the enfeebled old man and his mate began to creep back along the track where the flames were dying away as the conflagration sped before a changing wind. The screams died in the distance. Other stragglers scurried by, no one lending a helping hand to the man who had given his life to saving souls. Inspired by the sacred burden he held on one arm while the other guided the faltering footsteps of his wife, he crept slowly on toward a glimmer of light which led him away from the maddening furnace. It seemed miles to the aged man when in reality it was only a few hundred feet back to the land of a few living souls. He saw men scurrying past him toward the fire but could not understand their insane actions. He found his way to the only clear space and read a signboard which told him they had reached the town of Hinckley. The volunteer fire department including every male resident who could wield a bucket formed a long brigade from a tank less than 300 feet from the ill-fated train, and the fight for life began. It was like tossing a pint of water into a roaring furnace. Only those who had made their way to the rear coach escaped death.

Mrs. Allen despite the panic stricken mob fought her way into the coach. Deranged by the terrifying scene, hardly knowing where she was going or why, the guardian of Glad Ray raced down the aisle of the now

burning car, and blocked by a wall of smoke tried to turn back. In her confusion she missed a step between the two rear coaches and plunged headlong into the flames. She died almost instantly. The charred remains were recovered in less than an hour after the tragedy when the resucers succeeded in subdueing the fire and the ruins had been searched. Out of all the wreckage the only article found of seeming importance was the iron trunk that contained the meager belongings of Glad Ray and the letter telling the secret of her birth.

When the aged minister began to recover his senses he gazed in awe at the smiling child in his arms. By a strange trick or fate the iron trunk finally was associated with Glad Ray. The rescuers had discovered a black bag tied to the child's waist bearing the name of Mrs. Allen and a letter from her relative at Pine Lake telling her to come on with the little girl. The bag also contained the pasteboard baggage check which was found to correspond with the blackened brass tag wired to the iron trunk.

By daybreak, the town of Hinckley had become a charred waste of burned stumps, ruins and swamp. The forest fire, driven by changing winds, traveled rapidly toward the western part of the state, where its harvest was still richer in older and dryer pines. The man and woman who had consented to care for Glad Ray while Mrs. Allen forced her way back into the sleeper, were bound for Duluth. The clergyman considered it his duty to see that the baby girl reached

"Jack Sullivan's Tavern, Pine Lake, via Duluth," just as the tag on the handbag directed.

After several hours' tedious waiting on water-soaked land, another train arrived and carried the weary, half-sick passengers into Duluth, where Glad Ray encountered numerous strange faces and Northern indifference. Big-hearted Jack Sullivan was there, however, to meet his distant relative, and after many inquiries the minister located him among the watchers at the depot, and told him the story of the tragedy.

"So she left this little gel, did she?" Tears filled his eyes and rolled softly down his honest, weather-beaten face.

"Whose child is she, do you know?" asked Sullivan.

"Your late relative's handbag contains letters which may give you the necessary information."

After the keeper of the Pike Lake Tavern looked through the bag and was convinced that Stella Allen had been the guardian of the baby, and after he had read the name of "Glad Ray" on the gold locket, he stooped down and in his generous, well-meaning way spoke to the lonely babe.

"So ye've come to live wid me, hev ye?"

No answer; but the long fringed lashes slowly lifted and two soulful, brown eyes looked into those of faded grey with the most appealing expression Jack Sullivan ever had seen.

"What's yer name, baby?"

"Me no baby,—me bid durl."

Those standing about the child smiled as the sweet bird-like voice responded so independently.

"Thet's right; ye air a big gel." He patted the soft cheek where many tears and soiled chubby fingers had left their imprints. "Now tell me, what es yer name?"

"Dlad," she promptly replied.

"Is it Glad?" Do you mean 'Glad Ray'?"

"Es, Dlad Way." Without further hesitancy she raised her plump, baby arms to be taken. "Peez, takey me; I id orsul tired. Peez tarry me home."

"I guess ye hev won out, kid. Think I'll take ye fer keeps. God hez put a little sunshine into my life after all."

Jack Sullivan thanked those who had been kind. He then gathered Glad Ray in his arms and walked out of the station to his waiting surrey.

"It's a long ride ye hev before ye but kid, let yer Uncle Jack tell ye, it's home fer ye and me." Under his breath he added: "Wonder what kind o'hell Susan 'll raise whin I struts in wid dis kid. Let her holler; dis kid's mine, fer keeps."

He gently tickled the neck of old Jennie with the tip of his whip, and her nose pointed toward Pike Lake. Side by side, the rugged, good natured keeper, and the wee, innocent stranger started on the home stretch.

CHAPTER XVI.

GLAD Ray soon left her lisping babyhood days, and at the age of seven had become the unpaid little helper at Pike Lake Tavern. Susan Sullivan had learned to care for the child,—as much as she could care for anyone. She mothered Glad, but placed burdens on her little shoulders rather heavy for one of her years. Susan's affection depended on how much work the calloused and coarsened hands had been able to do. The slender delicate body seldom bent under its heavy labors, as sympathetic Jack Sullivan was always "hangin' 'round." He invariably "fetched" the wood or "brung" in the buckets of water.

Jack Sullivan had a weekly route of Duluth customers to whom he delivered eggs, butter and milk. During the summer tourist season, the Pike Lake Tavern folk could consume all their own products, but between October and May earning a living was a problem, and they found the selling of butter, eggs and milk fairly profitable. On some of these long, tedious trips little Glad Ray would cuddle up in a huge, well-worn Buffalo robe and make the dreary, cold trip from Pike Lake to Duluth with her foster Uncle. He always was pleased to have her along, as it eased his mind to know the child was not working too hard. It never occurred to Susan, childless soul, that a sensi-

tive, growing girl hardly out of the baby ages, could not do the general household drudgery as easily as she. Ever so often, she would permit Glad Ray to rest, but within a few moments the old woman's shrill voice would ring out:

"Don't let yer feet git glued to the shpot, we have supper tuh git and the wurk ez not done yit."

Glad Ray long ago learned to curb resentment. The child grew to seven years with somewhat of a whipped-dog expression, and an obedience more pathetic because her features invariably curved themselves into a fascinating, willing smile—as though it were a privilege to serve Susan simply for bits of praise such as:

"Looks nice, my chil'," or "here ez a cookie," or "this was good 'nuff fer this toime,—next you'll do bether."

Shortly after Christmas, we find Glad Ray in Duluth sitting on the box seat of the old wagon, all bundled up in the well-worn robe. She was waiting patiently for her Uncle Jack to come out of the kitchen entrance of the Anstrum home. Mrs. Anstrum was a snobbish, well-meaning woman, but much worn out from bearing four noisy boys and two very freckle-faced, poorly-trained, selfish girls ranging in ages from two and a half to fourteen years. As a housekeeper, Mrs. Anstrum was a good, cheap, novel reader; as a maker of children's garments and the famliy mender, she was a better sleeper; as a disciplinarian she was a hysterical preacher and self-sympathizer; as a cook she was head of her class in satisfying the gormandizing appetites of her children on candies, cookies,

uncooked dried fruits, slathers of cold boiled ham from the nearby delecatesen or canned soups with soda crackers; as a wife, Mrs. Anstrum was a whirlwind for camouflaging appearances and rounding corners whenever her "traveling-man" husband was expected home.

On Friday nights all the Anstrums had their weekly baths; all the beds were "slicked over" and called, "made;" the rugs and carpets were given a "lick and a promise;" the piles of dirty dishes, which always accumulated from Monday until Friday, were washed; the kitchen floor received its weekly mopping; and Mrs. Anstrum managed to curl her hair. Using sufficient energy to roast meats, bake or boil vegetables during any period between Mr. Anstrum's week-end visits was a mother-duty of which Mrs. Anstrum knew nothing. Her patient husband, Axel, was a trusting and excusing man, who had not discovered his wife's laziness. Faithfully he handed over his monthly check, keeping only his surplus expense account. Mrs. Anstrum seldom made an effort to save for she told herself, "with bringing up six husky children, clothing and educating them, I am almost worn to a frazzle trying to make both ends meet." It never occurred to her that a good stewed dinner, or an old fashioned boiled one, would be cheaper, nourishing and more satisfying to her six hopefuls. Neither did she care whether a change from her apathetic methods would increase her savings. What was bothering her now, she was explaining to Jack Sullivan, as she paid for the butter and eggs, was how she could get along

without a maid, and worse yet—she couldn't afford to pay the terrible wages they demanded.

"Wal—I wuz a thinkin' thet my niece, sittin' out yonder on the wagon, might help you a bit. She's jest seven, and she moight git her board en clothes off you, and pay fer em with wurk before school an' after. P'raps you air lookin' fer somebody stronger,—eh?"

"Can she wash dishes?"

"Bet she kin. She hez done thet since she wuz four whin she'd haf to stan' on a chair to reach the drain."

"Well, I am so busy sewing that I need someone just to wash and wipe the dishes. I would do most of the housework. Mrs. Anstrum sighed and looked so forlorn, that Jack Sullivan suggested he call Glad Ray and have her come in for inspection. Verily the beautiful child was inspected. Three of the Anstrum children had returned from school, but as it was the day the house was tidied over, and good things being cooked, they were all on their good behavior. Jack Sullivan always came late on Fridays, generally after the weekly cleaning, and thought Mrs. Anstrum posed as the model, hard-working housewife and worn-out mother. He and Axel remained in sweet ignorance of her lackadaisical methods.

"What's your name, dear?" Mrs. Anstrum inquired.

"Glad Ray," and the one slender knee bent slightly in polite courtesy.

"My,—she is a precocious child," commented the woman, airing a term which had impresed her as an appropriate one to be tried out on her husband.

"I don't know what thet means, but if ye air meanin'

she ez well behaved, she ez meek an' purfect, an' ez good ez they make em."

"Would you like to go to school?" questioned the calculating woman.

"Yes, ma'am,—I'd love it."

"Well, would you help me before and after school, if I gave you this chance?"

"Oh, yes, ma'am," the innocent child answered eagerly.

"Could she stay today, Mr. Sullivan? I am so terribly busy that she would be such a help."

"Wal,—I don't know what my ol' woman will say; but I guess she kin stay. She haint got iny other shooz but theez'en she hez on, but I reckin you kin find some ol' ones, caint yuh?"

"Oh, yes, I'll see she has shoes. The city furnishes all school books, and Glad Ray's services means being an obedient, helpful daughter. There is nothing I won't do to make her happy and one of my family. She is a little young," soliliquized Mrs. Anstrum, "but she will soon learn and have plenty of time for play."

Poor Jack Sullivan thought he was bettering his foster child's opportunities. He earnestly wanted her to attend the city school and escape many of the heavy labors Susan forced on her. Glad Ray clung to her Uncle, crying: "Please think of me every day, and don't fail to come here every Friday, will you?"

"Shure oi will, me darlint. Its your good oim thinkin' of. Don't cry, or you'll make yer ol' Uncle feel sorry."

Glad Ray obediently smiled as she removed her coat and untied her woolen hood.

"Now, say 'goodbye' to your Uncle Jack. You may call me 'Aunt Nettie,' that is my first name."

"Thank you," came again from the mobile lips, and 'Aunt Nettie' winced under the pressure of her conscience while secretly noting the labor she intended to demand.

Mr. Anstrum arrived from his weekly business trip before breakfast on Saturday. He told his wife if she had little Glad Ray in the home to share the work equally with the two girls, he was delighted, but she must not expect to make an unpaid servant of an infant.

"How horrid you talk to me, your wife. Seems you forget that I am always slaving for you and your children. Shame on you, Axel Anstrum. I do a thousand things, and take as many steps myself, just to save the strength of YOUR children," she argued unreasonably.

"Cut it out, Nettie. You are tired. Who in the devil said anything about MY children? Suppose they are not yours, too, are they? Possibly we found them, like Moses, in the rushes. Come on, dear, be fair. All I ask is to treat that beautiful, baby girl with the same consideration you would want some other mother to treat our Selma and Inga."

The children had been listening and tittered softly. They knew their mother. The father was contented to drop the subject to avoid any further tears and lamentations.

Saturday morning Selma Anstrum cleared the table of the breakfast dishes, and piled them in ugly unsystematic heaps on the kitchen sink and work table. Inga, the younger of the two girls, used the hair-filled sweeper over the dining room rug and brushed the chips and soot away before the open fireplace. Mr. Anstrum filled the huge woodbox in the kitchen and noticed how neatly glad Ray separated the silverplated ware from the gaudy, much chipped French China.

"You have a jewel in that little worker in the kitchen, Nettie. She will be quite a good example for the two girls."

"She will, if you do not interfere with my business and spoil her. Leave the child to me, and I'll have a real maid, by the time she is a very few years older, and it won't cost you a cent."

Axel Anstrum sighed. He had a flash-back of the time he had played stoker on shipboard to earn his way over to this land of golden dreams; and of boot-black days and sleeping in pine dry goods boxes, until a good farmer's wife took him in and treated the homeless immigrant as she would have wanted another mother to have treated her only son. He had died of apoplexy the year before. Axel had worn the dead son's old and good clothes and performed the duties which had been those of the departed. After a few years the family adopted Axel and gave him their family name of Anstrum, which was not unlike the name of his dead parents, Ansen. So, Axel Anstrum was more fortunate than most immigrant youths.

Later, he was sent to St. Paul to High School where he graduated, and then entered Agricultural College. Shortly after he returned to the farm Mr. Anstrum, Sr., passed away of paralysis. The mother seemed too crushed in grief to endure remaining on the old homestead. She sold the farm and, with Axel, moved to St. Paul, where he entered Business College. He then accepted a position in the office of the same Wire and Machinery Manufacturing Company with which he was identified when we find Glad Ray sharing in the household duties of the Anstrum home. Axel Anstrum had only remained in the office of his firm for a short period, when he was appointed State Representative. At the time of his promotion he married Nettie Bangs, and they, with his adopted mother, went to housekeeping in a tiny cottage, about the first investment Axel had ever made. Before the birth of Orsen, the oldest child, marauders forced their way into the cottage of the Anstrums during one of Axel's regular out-of-town trips. Nettie, his wife, was weak and frightened. Mrs. Anstrum, Sr., though old and feeble, bravely entered the hallway where she encountered the intruders. When the gun-men ordered her out of their way, the older woman pleaded with the men to leave, explaining that her daughter-in-law was in no condition to be frightened. Finding this appeal of no avail, she stood defiantly before Nettie to protect her from the vicious suggestive scrutiny of one of the two bullies. This antagonized the thief and he shot the aged woman through the heart. When Axel Anstrum returned, after a summons by wire, he found not only

the funeral details to arrange but also a son. His faithful, sacrificing mother's girlhood name had been Mattie Selma Orsen,—so he called his first-born "Orsen."

All of this rushed quickly before Axel Anstrum, and he repeated cautiously, but none the less emphatically: "I warn you, to treat Glad Ray as my saintly, adopted mother treated me. Let the little girl be an example, if you wish to, Nettie,—but have our children do exactly as much to help you as Glad Ray is expected to do."

"Trust me, Axel, to be a good disciplinarian. I know what is best for my household. I have not borne you six children, the oldest fourteen and the youngest two and a half years, without learning how to train them, and the meaning of 'justice.'"

"I hope so, Nettie," he sighed tolerantly, wondering at the same time if he happened to arrive home unexpectantly on Wednesday morning, instead of Saturday, what he would discover. He didn't want to do it; he didn't want to be disillusioned. Nettie had neglected many of her former charming and neat ways but, he considered, possibly he had expected too much. However, he had a faint suspicion that his sons had special Saturday and Sunday manners, since he had overheard parts of their conversation. He had once or twice heard his wife say: "Well, pin it, until your father goes," or "wait until your father goes and then you may perform, but for heavens sake act correctly and well trained while he is home;" or "stuff those soiled clothes way back in Orsen's closet, but remember where

you put them;" or "don't talk about cold meats, cottage cheese or pigs feet, or your father will think we live on delicatessen foods."

After Glad Ray had carefully washed the breakfast dishes for nine, scalded them, dried and put them away, she scoured the sink and faucets. She made a knee pad of an old piece of carpet she found in the woodshed and scrubbed the floor. Lastly, she finished her morning duties by polishing the two stoves—the gas and range. It was quite a shock to Mr. and Mrs. Anstrum when they discovered what a child CAN do who is brought up on cold, calculating judgment instead of hysterical sentiment. Glad Ray had removed her apron and hung it on the rack beside the range to dry.

"After I make up my cot, can I please play with the children?" she asked of her protectors.

"Yes, you may; but while you are upstairs, slick up the boy's beds, cedar mop around the floor and place their best shoes and clothes in their closets, will you?"

"Yes, ma'am," she sighed, as she recalled it would only be an hour before time to prepare luncheon.

Axel Anstrum let Glad Ray reach the top floor before he addresed his wife.

"Nettie, how could you deprive that youngster of her little request after she had worked so hard and cleaned better than the girls ever have done for you?"

"Now you are butting in,—don't try it Axel, unless you want a scene. My nerves are so completely upset, I can't stand to have you come home Saturdays and change our routine."

"I am going out and call the boys into the house and order them to pick up their own clothes and shoes, make their own beds and cedar mop their own floors. Nettie, it is their business to do this, and is a part of all boys' and girls' home instruction. How can Glad Ray ever go to school if you make her wait on our four strapping thoughtless boys."

"My sons are not thoughtless, and you have some other woman you care for more than you do me, or you'd not return to pick on your wife as a disciplinarian in this perfectly absurd manner." With this, Nettie Anstrum burst into a paroxysm of tears and moans, throwing herself into her husband's arms.

"Good gracious, I only want the boys to become considerate men. Don't cry Nettie, you'll get me so I'll not want to come home. I want you to do the right thing by this unfortunate child, and—and, I don't think it's fair to compel her to make the boys' beds."

"There you go, again! Who is the woman who is luring my husband away from me? I am almost crazy, I tell you,—you are cruel to me, Axel. I am almost crazy," she repeated.

"Crazy! You act like it," he responded, assisting her to a chair where she rested her tear stained face against the palms of her hands and swayed from side to side. "Excuse me, Nettie, I am going down on Superior Street to see a party on business."

"Axel! Axel! Please don't leave me."

Disgusted and angered, Axel Anstrum left the house, slamming the door with a bang. At the corner he met his boys, four of them,—the baby, named Theodore,

age two and a half years; Earl, four years old; Bensen, husky and tall for his six years; and Orsen, fourteen. All were having a battle of snowballs. The two girls, Inga, who was past eight, and Selma, twelve, were pegging away at a snow fort of their own making. Eager young Americans,—human, healthy and thoughtless.

"Come here," roared Axel Anstrum, in a voice which quite frightened his brood. "Come here, I say."

His six startled children rushed up before him in breathless amazement. "Go into the house, go right up to your rooms and make your beds, cedar mop your floors, and put your best clothes and shoes neatly away for tomorrow,—those that you had on when you expected me for breakfast. I shall return in ten minutes and expect to see your work well done. Don't ask Glad Ray to assist you, but ask her to play some more, as soon as you have obeyed me. Do you hear?"

"Yep," they chorused.

"Orsen, you help the baby with his little bed, but let him think he is doing most of it anyway. I've got to teach you youngsters what it means to be real honest members of a hardworking, American family. Now don't stop to talk it over with mamma. She is sick. Do as I tell you, or there will be a different war. Hear me?"

"Yep," they repeated in unison.

"I'll teach you to say 'yes, father,' next lesson." Axel Anstrum marchel along down the hill to Superior Street, not knowing exactly where he intended to "meet a party on business."

Glad Ray was dumbfounded when the noisy six all bore down and took her assignment away. She noted the melting snow they had brought in, and the dirty mud and water it left.

"Come on Glad, father says you are to bundle up and play "battle" with us, so we're ready now.

"But your beds haint made good enough," she gasped.

"Oh, never mind,—the top is smooth," responded Bensen, in boy fashion.

"But—the sheets air all twisted."

"Blame the sheets! We should worry about the sheets," to which remark they all giggled. "Monday and all next week until Friday night we won't make beds, nor know that we've got sheets *at tall,"* asserted Orsen authoritatively. "Come along, or ma'll come up and raise the roof because we've made too much noise for her daily headaches."

"Her daily fits," added Inga, and again the children suppresed their laughter with difficulty. All this was new to Glad Ray. She accompanied the children downstairs and out into the open, intending to wipe up the muddy spots left from their uncleaned shoes as soon as she came back. Grammar was unknown at the Sullivan Pike Lake Tavern, so little Glad Ray used the dialect she had heard from babyhood as spoken by her foster Aunt and Uncle. Her instinct was so keen and her sense of discernment so quick that anything new and pleasing was promptly appropriated.

"What's your full name?" asked Bensen of their newly acquired companion.

"Glad Ray," she promptly replied, and innocently.

"Aint it Glad Sullivan?" he persisted.

"Nope,—jist Glad Ray."

"What's your father's name?" inquired Orsen, whose curiosity was now aroused.

"Don't know; Uncle Jack never found out. I don't know nothin' 'bout my mother neither; she jist up and died I guess," the child sighed.

"Ha! ha!" chimed Selma, "just like the school teacher told us of Topsy—only Topsy was a piccaninny. Topsy was discovered and she didn't know nothing 'bout herself neither."

"Well, Glad is white anyway," added Orsen protectingly.

"Maybe. She don't know what she is, 'cept ma is going to make a maid out of her, after she learns how to do the waitin' on our table, kinda swell, like Mrs. Tooney's maid does," and Inga added her little monologue.

"Maids don't go to school." This from Orsen. "Glad Ray came down from Pike Lake to go to school, and to pay her way by helpin' like we all ought'a do when dad's out on the road."

"Oh, close your two cents! Who's asking you to tell what ma's going to do? Inga and I know, for we heard her tell Dad if he 'wouldn't butt in' she would have Glad Ray perfcetly trained as a maid as soon as she was a little older, and it wouldn't cost Dad a cent neither," and Selma tossed her proud head saucily.

"Glad Ray's just as good as you be, and better. She don't say mean things of nobody," flared back Orsen.

"You betchu,—she is nice all the time and I wish she was my truly sister," defended Bensen.

"Let's play" interrupted Inga. "Glad will haf' to go into the house in a few minutes to peel the taters, and I want her on my side."

The children completed their tasks and rushed out the front door with Glad Ray excited and rosy. The snow-battle raged, and Glad played with the same enthusiasm to win and be happy, that she displayed in every activity. Only when Mrs. Anstrum's shrill voice was heard did the children cease.

"Gla—ad," she sang out in that high, agonizing key which could easily be the ascending and painful climax to a poorly pitched song. "Come here at once." Obediently the little helper responded..

"Didn't I tell you I'd need you to start lunch?"

"Yes, ma'am,—but Mr. Anstrum told the children to come in the house, make their own beds, and have me go out with 'em; and I thought as he was the Papa, he ought'a know."

"Oh, you did, did you? Well, I'll tell him, like I'm telling you now, I am the boss, and I want you to know it. Don't you dare leave the house again without my permission. Do you hear me?" With this she angrily jerked Glad up the steps.

"Yes, ma'am, I hear. I'll always ask you after this, ma'am."

"You better, if you want to live in the same house with me."

Mr. Anstrum forgot to come home for lunch. It was about five o'clock, and quite dark, when he walked

rather unsteadily into the house, breath and clothes reeking with liquor. Mrs. Anstrum had entered the front hall ostensibly to find the baby's rubbers,—a duty seldom performed, and possibly she didn't even know that little Theodore, her youngest born, ever required rubbers.

"Why Axel, you have been drinking. Is this curse to be laid at my door with all my other burdens?"

"Shut up, and attend to your own bizhness. I'll eat shupper when you've got it ready. I'm as 'sungry as a wolf."

"Oh, Axel,"—she started to wail.

"If you want me to shtay in thish shouse, shut up," he roared. "I'm not drunk, but I will be shoon if you make me leave now, or sh'tart to rantin'. Who's boss, I shay?"

Mrs. Anstrum directed the children, excepting Selma, to wash up for supper, Selma to set the table and Glad Ray hurried to the kitchen. "I'll go with Glad Ray, myself, as she doesn't know a thing without my guidance, of course. Axel, you rest on the sofa until I call you."

"Thas right, and be quick about it. I'm hungry."

After supper, during which there had been silence and tears from Mrs. Anstrum's green-gray eyes, there were the usual duties, and little Glad Ray was pleased to show "Aunt Nettie" how to set buckwheat batter for the hotcakes in the morning.

Glad was very weary, and grateful when Mr. Anstrum instructed the children to wash their "feet, hands, teeth and pile into bed without noise," or he'd

"come up to inveshtigate." In no time the tired, delicate body was resting in deserved sleep, with the Anstrum alarm clock (set for seven A. M. on Sunday) close to her pillow. The clock had been placed there, by "Aunt Nettie," so that Glad could turn off the alarm quickly and not disturb any other member of the household.

On Monday just before he left for his trip, Mr. Anstrum instructed his wife not to fail to have Glad Ray attend school regularly and promptly. He suggested she write the Principal a little note introducing Glad Ray and mentioning the fact she was now a member of the Anstrum family. Mrs. Anstrum promised but promptly forgot.

On the following Friday trouble was brewing again.

"Ah, ma," began Orsen, "can't Glad mop up the kitchen floor after school? Gee wiz, we never had it mopped every mornin' before. Besides, she's been tardy three mornin's this week already, and her teacher spoke to me 'bout it. I know it's 'cause you make her mop up. Aint washin' an' wipin' the dishes 'nuff, 'cept when we clean up for pop?"

"How dare you speak to your unselfish, slaving mother like that? Shame on you! If Glad Ray doesn't want to be tardy, nobody is keeping her from getting up an hour earlier. She certainly must learn system."

"My teacher says growin' girls and boys need from eight to nine hours sleep," piped Selma.

"Your teacher is not runing my home,—and you children run along now. You are not supposed to be

the companions of our little maid, anyway. She will start to school as soon as she is ready, her duties done, and not one instant before."

With this admonition Nettie Anstrum fairly shoved the four oldest off to school; bundled up the two youngest and sent them outdoors to amuse themselves; pulled out a cheap paper novel from beneath a load of camouflage mending, and seated herself in the huge leather rocker in the parlor where, for the next two hours, she intended to read and sleep.

"I'm finished now, Aunt Nettie, and all washed up too. Kin I go to school, please?" pleaded a faint voice beside the engrossed reader.

"My! You frightened me. I'm liable to have a sinking spell. Perhaps you'd better remain home today and play with baby Theodore and Earl. Poor Earl, he never has as much pleasure as the others, he is so young—neither boy nor baby. Will you play today,—at least until half past eleven when I want you to fry the potatoes left over from yesterday, boil the thirty frankforts, pour the top off the three quart bottles of milk, saving the top for my tea. I need the nourishment dreadfully, and the skimmed milk will be sufficient for all of the children. Cut plenty of bread, and give each one a thin pat of butter and set the jar out again in the shed. Can you remember all that?"

"I think so," sighed Glad. "So today you want me to play with Earl, watch little Theodore and stay away from school?"

"That is it, dearie. Run along like a good little girl."

"Tomorrow—?"

"Never mind tomorow; run along."

So it was ever thus. Glad Ray was late for school almost every day, and absent at least one day in a week and sometimes three. Of course it was less important in the third grade,—the grade for which she qualified after being "tried out" in the first and second readers. This promotion brought her in the same room and class with eight year old Inga, and two rooms above six year old Bensen. This irritated Nettie Anstrum beyond endurance that a mere foundling should progress more rapidly than her own offspring. She did feel a primitive pride that they all stood fairly well in their classes, but it more than touched the primitive (it hurt her social aspirations) to have Glad Ray's marks so exceptionally high.

One Sunday, when Axel was at home, little Glad's face looked unusually flushed, and her soft brown eyes glistened with a peculiar brilliancy which greatly worried the patient father.

"Aren't you feeling well, dear?" enquired Mr. Anstrum kindly. The half-exhausted child commenced to cry.

"I—don't—know," she sobbed.

"Where are you sick, Glad? Don't be afraid; tell me, child. I want to help you."

"My—head and back ache. 'Taint right up here," and Glad Ray ran her fingers across her forehead. "Everything runs 'round and 'round, and I caint stop the swimmy feelin.'"

"Nettie, this child has a rather high temperature, I

am thinking. Where is the castor oil? She must have a tablespoonful, or two, go to bed immediately, and remain there until her head feels better and her fever has gone down. It may be the grippe, but maybe she's only tired," commented the husband reflectively.

"She never told me about not feeling well. I am so good to her too. It is funny she would act that way toward me, the one who took her in and gave her the opportunity to attend school." And Nettie Anstrum sniffed coldly as she glanced unsympathetically at the tear-stained, feverish countenance. Axel Anstrum went at once into the untidy pantry where he found the castor oil hidden behind some unkempt glasses half filled with moulded jelly. Painstakingly he mixed the laxative with a few tablespoonsful of orange juice.

"Please, ma'm,—I was afraid."

"Afraid of what? One would think I beat you to listen to such utter nonsense."

"There! There! Here is your castor oil. I've mixed it with orange juice, and you can have the remainder of the orange to eat," comforted Mr. Anstrum. "I am going to have Doctor Taylor see this little girl this evening. All of our own children are liable to come down with whatever little Glad Ray has, you know."

"Well, if that is the reason, I'll consent; but I can't see that Glad Ray is sick enough to need a Doctor."

"She shall have one, anyway," and with this final remark he 'phoned for the Anstrum family Physician. Later, after the Doctor had been there, it was decided to borrow a neighbor's horse and buggy and drive Glad

Ray to Pike Lake. Doctor Taylor had informed the Anstrums that Glad Ray had a well developed case of Typhoid Fever. The trip was hard on the little patient, but the joy of seeing her Uncle Jack again was most soothing.

"Wal, wal,—my little gel sick? Great scott, but your Uncle Jack is sorry! I'll soon nurse you back to health agin, honey, thin you kin go back to Mr. and Mrs. Anstrums an' to school.

"She was such a good child, and stood so well in her studies, that we will miss her dreadfully," hypocritically assured Mrs. Anstrum. "Glad may return as soon as she is able to go back to school."

"Thank you, ma'am. You air a nice lady; I kin see ut in yer face," broke in Susan. "I don't see ez how I'm iver goin' to do all my wurk, and keer fer the sick likes o' her,—but the Lord provides I guess,—so I be a hopin' thet I'll be able to do me jewty ez I seez ut."

"Thets it, Susan," assured Jack. "Little Glad Ray hez'unt a livin' soul but us in the wurld, en we kind o' feel like this ez the charity the Lord told about whin he sez, 'Suffer em to cum unto me.' I don't know much 'bout relijun, but I wants to do me jewty to this little gel. She shure ez a heap o' sunshine."

"She is a wonderful child, Mr. Sullivan. I will send her clothes to you," declared Mr. Anstrum sincerely, "and here is ten dollars to refill the Doctor's prescription, and have him call again at the Tavern if needed. Should you need anything more for the little girl, drop me a line,—or drive around some Friday and let Mrs.

Anstrum know what it is Glad Ray craves." Axel Anstrum, honest soul that he was, meant every word of his generous offer. "You have instructions about the child's diet. The Doctor wrote this down in detail, so you cannot possibly make a mistake about feeding her anything more than a limited liquid diet and occasional beaten whites of eggs. Remember, positively no solids."

"Thank you, sir,—en I'll foller thim orders, sir," answered Susan frightened at Glad Ray's pathetic helplessness. "I guess I've always 's'pected heaps o' her arms an' legs, but she ez a diff-runt chil' than iny I've hern tell about."

"She shure ez," added old Sullivan, as they removed the clothing from the limp, hot body to place her in the spare room bed in the left wing of the Tavern. Ordinarily Glad Ray slept on a cot in the attic,—a big room, clean as an attic can be, whitewashed and systematically arranged with trunks, storage boxes, Glad Ray's cot, a broken mirror, an old bench with wash basin and pitcher on it, and a few pictures the child had cut out of magazines left at the Tavern by hunters and tourists. The next day, Glad Ray was not conscious of her surroundings, and Uncle Jack had to sit close lest the patient leave her bed, or throw off the covers in feverish delirium.

"Please, please—don't keep me away from school."

"Darlin'! Darlin'! You air home with Uncle Jack."

"Please, please don't make me scrub the floor every mornin'. I'm always late, and my Aunt Susan'll scold."

"Darlin'! You air home now. Aunt Susan'll never scold. Git well, I've missed you turribul like, and we love you. Kin you hear me, Glad?" Old Susan, in her rough, honest fashion was trying to prove she really loved Glad.

"I like my Aunt Susan better'n you. She ez honest. Aunt Nettie, you sometimes lie to your man. I've hern you lots o' times."

"Thar,—thar, me darlin'! Uncle Jack ez here, so ez yer Aunt Susan. Don't talk, honey, jist shleep."

Her delirium lasted two days and three nights. The joint owners of Pike Lake Tavern discovered what the golden haired, baby girl meant to them and they promised if God spared her, she would become the sole heir to their many acres. After nine weeks of illness, the emaciated little patient was able to sit in the "settin'" room bay window, where she could look out at the leafless trees, see the tiny buds, and hear the many birds,—the first signs of Spring's Awakening. Glad Ray was eight years old now, having had what the Sullivans reckoned was another birthday while away.

"Wal, how's my little gel, this mornin'?" greeted Uncle Jack Sullivan.

"Fine, Uncle. I could almost race with the robins I see outside."

"Thet's good. Soundin' more like your'n own self, —you darlin.' Here's Aunt Susan with your tonic an' some preserves, toast, also white of egg."

"Thank you Auntie,—this looks so good," and the convalescent began to nibble on the fresh crisp toast.

"We want to ax you sumpthin' this mornin', darlin'. Be you anxious to git back to Anstrums an' yer school?"

"No, Uncle Jack, I want to stay right home here with Aunt Susan and you, and I haint got no objection to attendin' the rural school every day. In fact I'm thinkin' I'd ruther like it. I kin walk it by the openin' of school next September. I'll have all Summer to git well."

Susan and Jack exchanged significant looks, and made up their minds that "their little gel hed wurked more'n her back would allow" and her illness was God's way to rest the frail body.

"Home—house. A house means nothin' Aunt Susan, if folks lie and do things what their man would'a bin ashamed of. I'd much rather stay tuh home, thank you."

"Did she lie to him, darlin'?"

"Let's not say nothin' Aunty, but just love one another, and all three on us be happy here. I couldn't a bin happy at Anstrums, 'cept Mr. Anstrum was lovely when he come home. The children were nice too, an' —an'—Mrs. Anstrum wanted to be nice,—honest she tried to,—she did. But she was trainin' me fer her maid, and school didn't count much. You caint blame her though, 'cause I got ahead of Bensen and Inga in my classes. Yes, I was jest put up in A class in Inga's room, and Inga was left in B class, poor girl. Teacher said I was late so much thet she'd haf 'tuh report me if Mrs. Anstrum dint send me earlier. Then I got sick, so Mrs. Anstrum won't need to worry 'bout what

the Principal thinks of the teacher's report. I haint a'goin' to Duluth agin until I finish Grammar School and start in High, unless—unless—"

"Unless what, me darlin'?" asked the old man with choking voice.

"Unless they tell Uncle Jack to fetch me down to Selma's birthday party which they were all plannin' fer. Her birthday is June Twenty-fourth, on a Saturday, an' her father's goin' to lead the games. He's a nice father, but he haint home 'nuff to git his fambly to knowin' him much. I kinda knowed him 'cause I felt sorry fer him."

"Well,—I'll see Mrs. Anstrum whin I fetch the eggs, an' I'll hear if they wants my little gel."

"Thank you, Uncle, only don't ax 'em, 'cause I was only a maid, an' maids haint 'sposed to go with the Anstrums."

CHAPTER XVII.

LIKE the bursting buds of the late Spring, Glad Ray blossomed into the wonderful beauty of childhood in perfect harmony with the great out doors. The ravages of the fever soon died away, her cheeks pinked, her lips puckered into a perpetual smile, her eyes danced like glistening stars. She whistled, she sang, she danced through the great wild woods about Pike Lake. The towering pines became her guardians, the leaping squirrels her playmates and the birds fairly burst their tiny throats to proclaim their love for the fairest child of the great Northwest.

Grateful Jack Sullivan's big heart beat in approval of every innocent prank, and even the cold, indifferent Susan of other days unconsciously lifted the slight burdens off the frail shoulders of the child of love. Both foster parents seemed to understand. They determined to further educate Glad Ray but it seemed a sacrilege to tear the child from the canvas with the forest setting.

"I'm so happy, Uncle Jack," Glad would exclaim. "I love the woods, the flowers, the birds, but best of all I like it here in your big arms." And Uncle Jack would ruffle the towsled curls in his protecting way.

With the coming of Summer, Glad's happiness knew no bounds. Tourists noticed the striking unselfishness

of the child. She always seemed to anticipate the needs of a guest or the slightest desire of Uncle Jack or Aunt Susan. When Jack had lost his knife it was Glad who found it; when he wanted his pipe Glad was filling it; when he started for a walk Glad handed him his hat; when there were holes in his stockings, Glad carried them to Aunt Susan. It was Glad who always brought Susan's glasses; it was Glad who always saved her a hundred steps; it was Glad who was always doing things, in the kitchen, in the guest rooms; everywhere was this child of love,—she of the wondrous eyes and perpetual smile. With skeins of steel she wound her web around the hearts of old Susan and Jack. The child radiated purest love and was impartial in her service. Her keen intuition, even her judgment was a barometer for Jack Sullivan,—an index to the character of his customers. He was extremely careful of the man for whom Glad did not display her usual consideration.

Occasionally Glad mentioned her school days in Duluth and frequently inquired about the Anstrum family. On his return from one of his regular weekly trips Uncle Jack's face was wreathed in smiles. He had a secret for Glad. She was invited to the birthday party. Yes, it was true. Selma Anstrum had told old Sullivan to bring Glad to Duluth with him on the following Friday so she could stay all night and attend the children's party Saturday afternoon. Selma had not told her mother about inviting Glad. No one was more surprised than Mrs. Anstrum when the child greeted her at the kitchen door, but tact kept her from showing

her displeasure. As soon as her Uncle Jack had bade Glad Ray goodbye and assured her that he "would drive down special-like fer you on Sunday," he jumped into his delivery buggy and was gone.

"I have the cutest little lace cap for you to wear when you wait on the other children at the party, and a tiny serving apron which will exactly suit you. Seems to me, my little maid has grown taller since her recent illness." Mrs. Anstrum pretended to be busy with some important duty.

Glad Ray was completely taken by surprise. Her heart pounded with despair.

"You mean—you mean—I am not one of the party—but—just a little maid? Is that what you mean?" she asked anxiously.

Mrs. Anstrum nodded.

"Oh, I see.—I'm only the maid fer Selma's party."

"You are, if you don't spoil everything by crying about it."

Glad Ray stopped her tears, as she meekly tried on the maid's outfit.

"You may set the kettle on the stove for tea," she said, "and we will have some bakery buns and jelly which is about all I planned for tonight.

"Yes, ma'am, I will," and Glad methodically started her duties, dismissing all dreams about sharing in any pleasures of the party. During the meal Glad was rehearsed in the art of serving the children imaginary trays of cakes, refilling their soft-drink glasses and passing nappies of candies and shelled nuts. The Anstrum flock enjoyed the schooling immensely—all ex-

cept Selma and Orsen, who resented their little friend acting in the capacity of a maid in uniform.

"Aw, ma, can't Glad Ray sit at the table tomorrow?" interrupted Orsen as the training progressed.

"My children are born of fine stock, and Glad Ray is our little maid, and I am quite certain by this time she knows her place thoroughly," snapped the haughty mother.

"What kind of stock is Glad Ray made of that we aint?" demanded Inga. Glad Ray had left the room.

"She sprung from nothing as far as the Sullivans can find out. A foundling is a foundling and a nobody."

"Pop was a nobody then, for he was a foundling," exclaimed Inga.

"Your father's people," Mrs. Anstrum lied, "were fine folk in the old country,—some of them land owners and several ministers. As for my folk,—they were very rich, but lost their money through a bunch of nobodys' from other folk's families."

"What did your folks go with nobodys' for, when your folks thought they were so much?" enquired Orsen impudently.

"That will do; and if you utter another word of back talk, I'll not permit *you* to sit at the table tomorrow."

Orsen thought that would be a great idea, but later recalled his sister Selma's chum, Grace Baker,—and he wanted to sit next to Grace.

As the preparations for the party went merrily on, Glad forgot the cruelty of Mrs. Anstrum and decided

to make the best of an unhappy situation. Then came a wire from her friend, Mr. Anstrum, congratulating Selma on her thirteenth birthday, but expressing regret that he could not get home. Poor Glad had been hoping Mr. Anstrum would order his wife to see that she was treated like the other guests. This was the death sentence for Glad's hopes. For an instant both smiles and tears struggled for mastery, and the smiles won.

The guests began to arrive. Attired in a simple black sateen dress partly covered by a white apron, a little lace bow cap perched on the top of her golden hair which was stiffly and unbecomingly dressed, Glad sat in the kitchen peering through the half open door. She saw Mrs. Anstrum, like a clucking hen, trying to mother the brood. Her former school chums were there and she wondered whether they would speak to her. Inga was ordered to the piano. The grand march began. To Glad this was paradise and her heart thumped in accord with every movement. Around the table the children circled, searching for their names on the place cards. Glad's part in the festivities were to begin when, in all the splendor of her maidship she was to light the birthday cake. The servant in the house caught her cue from Mrs. Anstrum and marching to her post of duty she leaned over Orsen, close to Selma and touched the lighted taper to each candle. After this ceremony she noiselessly departed, but not before Orsen had slipped a hurriedly written note into her right hand, which fortunately escaped Mrs. Anstrum's green-gray eyes. As soon as Glad Ray reached the kitchen she read it:

"I like you next to Grace Baker. You are prettier than Grace. Do you like me? I am sorry that ma is so funny, but most mas are I guess. Maybe you're lucky that you have no ma. If you like me, touch my hand when you come close to me next time. Will you *please?*

Orsen."

Glad smuggled the note into her stocking, accepted the huge tray which the colored cook handed her and re-entered the dining room. As she began to serve the "somebodys" at the farthest end of the table, Glad Ray did not reach Orsen for several minutes. Every blue blooded lad and lassie appeared to have a regular, healthy, mongrel appetite. Glad Ray hesitated beside Selma and Orsen, and courage seemed to fail her. With a desire to smile at Orsen, her humiliation kept her eyes from meeting his. The other children had not recognized Glad Ray. She imagined this was proper when "somebodys" came in contact with "nobodys." When the candles were blown out, and the ice-cream served, several layer cakes were yet to be passed. Orsen had helped himself to the motto candy hearts and handed one to Grace Baker, reading: "I think you're sweet." He then found one burning with the secret of his impetuous emotions: "I want to kiss you, for I love you." By the time Glad Ray reached Orsen, he found a way to slip the candy heart into the little maid's right hand. For an instant she colored a rosy hue, but the thought of being a "nobody" was too serious a matter for such a token as a candy heart to blot out mortification so quickly. When Glad reached the kitchen she ventured to read the inscription. Carefully she folded Orsen's note around the candy motto

and replaced both in her stocking. Finally the guests departed. Glad Ray was busily washing the dishes when Orsen entered.

"Gee, Glad, I'm sorry you mised the party. We had, —no, I mean, they had a bully time; but all the while I wanted you. Did you read my note and the candy heart?"

"Yes, but I'm busy, Orsen." This, with her head bent low over her soapy dishwater to avoid letting her first beau perceive the scalding tears of mingled regret and shame.

"I think you're a 'somebody' and ma's a 'nobody'; so there!"

"Thank you. Your mother is a good mother, and I like her too."

"Shure, you'd like anyone who needed to have somebody stick up for 'em. Will you kiss me?" he coaxed bluntly.

"Maybe not—now."

"Oh, gee! Yes, NOW. We'll never get a better chance; and I love you, Glad."

"You think I am a 'somebody'?"

"I think you are the best girl I ever knew. I gave Grace Baker a candy motto with only: "I think you're sweet" on it, but I gave you the REAL one, and I MEAN it too. Now will you kiss me?"

"Please wait until I take down my curls, my head hurts," the vain little miss protested.

"I'll help you, sweetie."

Glad and Orsen began picking the hairpins out of the bow-cap and golden curls. Soon a flood of beau-

tiful ringlets fell about Glad's shoulders and she looked like her own fascinating self once more.

"There,—your curls are down now; will you?"

Glad hesitatingly nodded consent, and offered her lips to her first boy friend.

"Um! That was lovely, sweetie. When I'm a man I sure will marry you,—see if I don't."

Both children giggled innocently, and Orsen was about to dry the clean pile of scalded dishes for his little sweetheart, when Mrs. Anstrum entered.

"March to the front room, and never let me see an Anstrum in this kitchen when I have servants in it." Orsen departed, but not before he touched Glad's trembling hand as he laid the dishtowel over the pink fingers as though by accident. "That reminds me, Glad, I'll pay you today." Mrs. Anstrum thrust fifty cents into Glad Ray's wet palm.

"What is this for, Aunt Nettie?"

"Wages for your services. Another thing, my name is Mrs. Anstrum."

"Oh,—yes, I won't forget to call you that agin. And,—well,—well—I've never spoken up before, and I hope you won't consider me much worser'n a 'nobody', but if you want me to be paid like maids are paid, why —why—I don't think fifty cents is enough. If my servin,' wearin' that horrid old lace cap, havin' my hair twisted up so stiff like a chimney, and washin' an' dryin' all the dishes, cleanin' the floors an' ever'thin' is worth anythin' *at tall,* it ez worth what my Aunt Susan pays when she hez to hire a 'somebody' to help her with the kitchen wurk durin' busy season."

"You spiteful, impudent child! I'll *donate* what you insist on receiving, but I paid what I think you are worth for the two days."

"Well,—you kin *donate* me a dollar a day fer the two days, an' I'll never come here agin. I think it's kinda wicked fer you to—"

Glad was not permitted to finish. Mrs. Anstrum's green-gray eyes forbid. The child accepted the two dollars, and considered that in being told she was a 'nobody' and doing a servant's labors she had, indeed, earned it. So did her Uncle Jack, when told the entire story including the secret declarations of Orsen.

"The ol' skin-flint! Fer thet yer Uncle Jack'll niver deliver iny more eggs tuh her,—see"? Susan Sullivan exclaimed. Susan particularly resented the least social neglect shown her adopted niece.

Having determined to spare Glad Ray further embarassment in Duluth, Jack and Susan decided she should attend the "deestrict schule" and then go to the city to graduate from High. The years that followed were filled with interest,—the happiest in the life of the ageing couple.

At the Pike Lake, district school, where boys and girls came from a radius of four miles, Glad was idolized from the very day she arrived astride her sorel charger, "Old Sal." This mare had been a famous pacer in her day, but now one eye was gone, the tail was little more than a stub, the mane shaggly and worn, the off front leg spavined. However, "Old Sal's ambition for speed had never died and at times she paced a quarter like a four year old.

The day before Glad started to day school the cart wheel was broken and she had to ride astride the old nag. It proved to be a wonderful adventure. As she neared the schoolhouse she noticed the road side was lined with boys and girls of all ages, swinging their books and playing pranks. All hailed her as "Old Sal" strode by, stepping high and unusually ambitious. The omnipresent bad boy tossed a stone into the horse's ribs, and the space ahead, to the one-eyed vision of Old Sal, was a race course again. Away she sped with Glad bouncing, children shouting,—down the final stretch toward the finish line. Directly in front of the "reviewing stand" "Sal" stopped short. Over her head went Glad, deposited safely at the very school house gate. All the early arrivals, lead by the teacher, rushed to the aid of the child. When Nellie Minter, the teacher, picked Glad up, the child opened her eyes wide and smiled her gratitude. The anxious boys and girls were assured Glad was unhurt. There was not a tear, not even a whimper. Glad was no "cry baby" and that meant everything at the district school.

During the weeks that followed Glad Ray became the talk of the country for miles around. Children were always telling their parents about little feats of daring on the back of her wonderful mare; of unusual acts of kindness to little ones in distress; of tears she wiped away; of fights she stopped; of marks she made;—and never was there a word breathed about her parentage. Under Miss Minter's instructions both boys and girls were rated strictly on merit.

Miss Minter, a graduate of an eastern college, always remained the fast friend of Glad Ray. The teacher had decided to devote her life to real work in her own neighborhood and is still recalled at Pike Lake as a woman of loyalty and devotion to her home people whose blessing she won by years of faithful service to the cause of education. It was Miss Minter who taught Glad the little graces of young womanhood, who instructed her in all the realities of life, who gave of her love to the child, as Glad gave to everyone. During vacation periods Glad visited her teacher; and the happiest moments in the lives of her foster parents were the times when Miss Minter would predict a wonderful future for their adopted niece. So the years rolled by.

Then came the next great event in the career of Glad. She entered high school at Duluth. About a week after she had registered as a freshman she met Selma Anstrum, the chum of Jessie Highland, only daughter of the widow Highland with whom Glad Ray had obtained room and board in even exchange for Pike Lake farm products. Selma, now sixteen and thoroughly imbued with her mother's ideas, chilled Glad's frank greeting. She ignored the girl's proffered hand and looked down on her with such a supercillious air that Glad Ray felt much like a young canary must feel who faces a huge house cat for the first time.

"Hello, Selma, dear! How you have grown! You look lovely," and Glad offered to kiss her.

Selma turned her cheek. "Thank you, she re-

sponded coldly. "You are taller, too. I hear you are living with the widow, Mrs. Emma Highland, and my chum, Jessie."

"Yes. Mrs. Highland is a lovely woman and Jessie is very charming." By this time Glad had quite recovered and frigidly drew away.

"You are not her maid, then?"

"No,—I have never really been anyone's maid, Selma."

"What are you lying for? You were my mother's maid, and I can prove it." Selma was in a rage of jealousy.

"I thought Selma, by this time you would understand your mother could not afford a maid, and not much more than afford to pay Uncle Jack for his farm supplies. She compelled me to act as her little maid unknown to my guardians, after she had asked them to have me come and share your home. I was to wash and wipe the dishes while you girls were supposed to do the other work."

"Well, you were a maid anyway, and I am going to tell Mrs. Highland. You are not fit to live with Jessie."

"If that is how you value our former friendship, rush right over now," and Glad Ray left Selma standing in blank amazement, chin tilted to a ridiculous angle. Glad suddenly realized a word in defense of maids might not be amiss, so she retraced her steps just far enough to be heard distinctly by Selma and Jessie, the latter having joined her chum. "I'd rather be a kind, worthy maid than a snobby want-to-be

'somebody' like you. Some day you will see yourself as others see you, and then I'd truly like to renew our acquaintance." Seeing Jessie, she concluded: "Good Morning, Jessie," to which the latter responded in a dazed manner not knowing what Glad Ray's sudden outburst was about. Fortunately, Selma and Jessie were in the Junior Class and did not come in close contact with Glad Ray. Later, Glad began to notice an unfavorable change in the attitude of several Freshman girls.

CHAPTER XVIII

DURING the first freshman examinations Glad Ray won the recognition of the entire class when she stepped gingerly over the heads of the city girls and boys into first rank. Coming from the country schools, teachers and principles were greatly surprised when this slip of a girl demonstrated the thoroughness of Minnesota rural grade training. The high marks of the country girl became the topic of general discussion in high school circles. Wise educators, city bred and city trained, maintained the showing was due entirely to the aptitude of Miss Ray. Teachers who had graduated from country schools declared with equal emphasis that her high standard was an evidence of a better educational system. So the discussion raged and Glad Ray unconsciously became an individual of unusual interest.

One of the characteristics of Glad, even in her youth, was her keen analytical method of handling every problem. Her's was excellent logic in addition to beauty and intelligence which won almost instant recognition. Praise meant little to Glad Ray, but she did feel a sense of gratitude in the realization that Uncle Jack and Aunt Susan would glory in her achievements. She had not mentioned the high marks in her letters home, but when her teacher announced that Glady Ray had been selected as one of the freshman

debating team of three, she wrote the joyful news to Pike Lake.

A growing jealousy on the part of certain classmates had not disturbed Glad. She was humming merrily one Thursday morning on her way to the Duluth Central High. The chill winds brought the roses to her cheeks and even the tip of her nose reddened. As she swung into the hallway she greeted her class mates joyfully but noticed here and there a look of haughty disdain. A few of the girls did not speak and one boy she liked quite well completely ignored her. Puzzled and deeply chagrined she attributed the chill to some malicious report that had been spread the afternoon before. How it hurt. All the joy of scholastic victory died in the sorrow of the coldness shown by her classmates. Perhaps, she thought, parents had been using her for an example and before she would cause anyone pain she would let others have the honors at the end of the term.

When Glad was called into the private office of Principal John Ryan, instead of being frightened, she felt a keen sense of relief. At least she would know the terrible truth. That distinguished educator seemed very grave as he looked at her over his glasses.

"What is this I hear, Miss Ray," he asked, "about Glad Ray being a fictitious name. What is your right name?"

"Why,—why,—I don't quite understand." Glad Ray's knees began to tremble and her throat became dry.

"Exactly what I say. There are rumors about High

School, especially in your Freshman class, that your name is not Ray, and that you are here for no good purpose."

"My name is Glad Ray, sir."

"Who are your parents?"

"I have neither father nor mother," and she choked back her tears with difficulty.

"Who are your guardians?"

"Mr. Jack Sullivan and his wife, Susan, my dearest friends," she managed to answer.

"What is their address, please," and he began to make notes of what she was saying.

"Pike Lake Tavern,—Pike Lake, Minnesota."

"You mean the Pike Lake roadhouse?" he asked so sharpely that it even startled the stenogapher.

"I've never heard our Tavern called a roadhouse, Sir. I don't know what you mean."

"With whom do you reside here in the city?"

"With Mrs. Highland, sir."

"I don't recall her. Do you know anyone else in Duluth whom I could use as a reference? You seem a nice girl to me and fit to take part in our schoo' events."

He looked quizzically at Glad Ray, whose heart was thumping so hard the poor child thought certainly the Principal must hear it also.

"I don't know anyone else,—but—but—when I was a little girl about seven or eight years old I lived with a Mrs. Axel Anstrum, sir."

"Oh, did you? Well, I know the Anstrums very

well; fine folk. This will do now; I'll see Mr. or Mrs. Anstrum about your references.

"Please—please—see Mr. Anstrum, because both his wife and daughters have no use for me or—well—I'm a 'nobody' to them." With this last remark Glad burst into tears.

The Principal was touched. "Now, now, don't worry. I'm quite certain this little rumor is idle nonsense. You are a nice girl; so run along to your classes."

Glad Ray "ran along," but not to her classes. She went immediately to her dressing room, put on her heavy cloak and fur cap, leaving at once for the Highland home. As she entered Mrs. Highland was reading in the front bay window and saw the usually smiling face now flushed and serious, with eyes red from weeping.

"What is the trouble, Glad Ray?" she inquired as Glad softly closed the outer door.

"Oh,—I can't—stand it," and a fresh flood of girlhood grief manifested itself.

"Come in here, my dear, as soon as you remove your wraps and tell me all about it." This was said in such a kind, motherly tone that Glad at once felt Mrs. Highland would make a comforting soul to whom she could pour forth her troubles. Glad related the two happenings in detail,—that of meeting Selma early in September and her insulting remarks, and of the newer story regarding the roadhouse and her name.

"Well, dear, anyone to look at you, and to live with you as I have since September, would know what a

lovable girl you are. I think it is my duty to go and visit the Principal this very afternoon, myself."

"Oh, thank you! Will you truly?" Glad touched the older woman's hand in grateful appreciation.

"Yes, dear,—before Mrs. Anstrum starts to give a poor impression of your station in life."

"You will be wonderful if you only will. I haven't anybody, you know. If faithful Aunt Susan came in, she'd shake her fist in the Principal's face and say such cutting things. It would only convince him that he would not want Aunt Susan about very frequently, and incidentally Mr. Ryan might dismiss me. If I sent dear, old, Uncle Jack, he'd speak so crudely that the Principal would think I most certainly must be a 'nobody', as Mrs. Anstrum loved to make me feel. Uncle Jack is so good and loyal that he'd suffer dreadfully just to know I suffered."

"That's all right, little girl, I'll go over to the High School this afternoon."

Mrs. Highland kept her word, and bumped into Mrs. Anstrum, who had responded quickly to a telephone call from the Principal. She was sitting in a whispering, private conference with him, as the widow entered.

"Yes, and if a child of that class heads a public debate," argued Mrs. Anstrum, raising her voice, "my Inga cannot be on the team. Glad Ray comes from a bad-house in the first place, and in the second place somebody left her, or some woman had her, at this house and now the Sullivans are saddled with her, and are boarding her out to get rid of responsibility. The

girl is easily led. My Inga cannot associate with girls of Glad Ray's type."

"Well, well,—no reason for undue excitement, I am certain, Mrs. Anstrum. We will look further into this matter before any definite steps are taken, and in the meantime since you are so well informed, I hope you will be considerate enough not to mention this matter. Certainly, I thank you." Mrs. Anstrum had risen to take her departure.

"Oh, how do you do, Mrs. Highland," exclaimed Mrs. Anstrum.

A haughty, blank stare was the responsive greeting the guilty gossip received as Glad Ray's defender walked rapidly to Mr. Ryan's desk.

"My name is Mrs. Emma Highland, widow of Emerson Highland, late President of the Interstate Railway. I have come here in defense of a pure, lovable girl, Glad Ray,—the little foundling now living with me. Unfortunately it is my painful duty to refute every word of this malicious creature, Mrs. Axel Anstrum, whom I unwittingly heard speak. She has told you jealous and vicious lies."

Dumfounded, Mrs. Anstrum had remained standing in the doorway, staring at Mrs. Highland until the latter had finished her stratling denunciation. When she heard the fearless and truthful opening remarks, Mrs. Anstrum tiptoed away, hastening to the protection of her own roof.

"Please be seated," Prof. Ryan indicated the chair just vacated by Mrs. Anstrum. "I hope my zeal to

silence unwarranted gossip has not stirred up a hornet's nest."

After an hour of earnest consultation, Principal Ryan decided Mrs. Anstrum was the originator of the unpleasant rumor.

"Glad Ray flatly refuses to take part in the debate." he concluded. "I hope you can persuade her to recall her decision."

Mrs. Highland readily consented to try, and after a few moments further conversation made her dignified adieus. She rushed back home to Glad Ray who had thrown herself on the bed and was sobbing bitterly.

"It's all right, dear," Mrs. Highland explained. "Mr. Ryan understands conditions and the ugly gossip will cease." She received a weak promise from Glad Ray to go on the team. Two days later Glad Ray visited the Principal's office.

"Whatever you think best, Glad Ray; but if I were you, I would win that debate and forever silence the idle, waggling tongues of jealous scandal mongers," Prof. Ryan urged. That was good logic for older heads, but for sensitive Glad Ray, it only meant more gossip.

"No, sir, if you please," she begged. "I must be excused. I will do my best to finish school this year, but I can assure you, I'm much happier out at the Tavern with its loyal, though ignorant, owners whose guardianship is at least the one faithful star in my sky."

"Just as you say, Glad," and he shook hands cordially as he bade her goodbye.

On Valentine night the Freshmen planned a little party. Glad Ray had not served on any committees but she hoped some one of the boys would ask her to attend. Days passed and no invitation came. Two nights before the party Orsen Anstrum paid his first social call. She received him pleasantly, but not effusively. His mother had forbidden the children to have anything to do with her former "maid," and Orsen had complied with his mother's jealous, unjust request. But he could not remain away a moment longer.

"Why,—I thought your mother—would not let—"

"Yes, Glad, but you know how 'tis—a fellow can stand just so much of having both hands and feet needlessly tied, and I've simply up and bolted."

"I appreciate your sacrifice, Orsen,—coming to call on me, but you must not come again. She IS your mother, you know."

"Sure, I know it; I'm no more to blame for being her boy, than you are for not having any parents. Have you forgotten the note and—and—the kiss?" he added in a half-whisper.

"I have tried to,—but, oh, well, you are so much like a brother, that I feel I can be honest with you, can't I Orsen?"

"Sure,—but—but you care for me?"

"I have always cared for you because you tried to protect me and stood up for me, but I thought of the protection like a sister might," she responded frankly.

Orsen's expression changed to one of disappointment.

"Then you won't go to the Valentine party with me? I bought two tickets, and Harry Lloyd, another senior in my Scientific Course, bought a couple too, and he is going to take his girl, who is a freshman in your class. Thought we could call it a party of four."

"That would be just lovely. Yes, of course I'll go, Orsen, if you don't think somebody will look down on you for taking me," she consented with much concern.

"Oh, hang it, if they do. They can't hurt me. Just let 'em say anything about you that I can hear, and the entire senior class,—at least those of my Fraternity, will wipe up the floor with 'em!"

"Let's not have war, Orsen,—now promise me not to make any scenes. If anyone says anything, and we hear it, will you take me directly home?"

"Yes, I'll promise anything, if you'll only go,—you dance beautifully, and there isn't a girl in the entire Central High who can stand a show with you. That's what ails 'em,—dang 'em,—they are jealous of your standings, your beautiful hair and—and—oh, kiss me once more, like you did that day after Selma's party—will you please?"

"No, Orsen, not today. I am older now, and don't melt quite so easily, but—but—I do appreciate your asking me."

"What,—appreciate me asking you to the dance or for a kiss?" he asked roguishly.

"Both," she whispered, blushing prettily.

"So you positively will go to the party with me."

"Yes, since you promise to take me directly home in case anything unpleasant happens."

"I think it's safe to promise that, but I'll never promise not to go right straight back and smash the face of the trouble-maker. I'll be here for you at five minutes to eight, sharp."

"Thank you, Orsen, I will be ready."

Orsen Anstrum, with Harry Lloyd and Martha Adams, called for Glad Ray promptly at five minutes before eight on Valentine's night, and all four hurried along toward the Central High School where the first big party of the year was being held.

"What is the money, made tonight, going to be used for, Glad?" inquired Orsen.

"For Historical Statuary and Paintings I believe."

"Wish they had a dozen schools to decorate. Ain't this the gay old night?"

"It is wonderful. I can hear the High School Orchestra way out here, and we are just opposite the front entrance. Some of the windows are down from the top."

"Let's hurry I'm bursting for a dance with you," and Orsen squeezed the little mittened hand as they climbed the terraced stone steps. Out on the floor they hurried.

"This is the life. You certainly beat all the girls dancing. Let me see your program while I have a chance," Orsen coaxed.

Reluctantly Glad handed Orsen her dancing program. There were no names on it, and her escort noticed this immediately.

"May I bring some of the fellows to dance with you, Glad?"

"Please don't bring them; let them come to me without urging, or not at all."

"Just as you say, but I'm going to put myself down for every other dance and "Home Sweet Home," of course. Is that too many?" Orsen commenced to write his full name for ten dances.

"You may have them. Orsen, you certainly are kind to me," she whispered.

"Tosh, on such stuff. You're the finest girl I know; one girl in a hundred; and I want 'em all to find it out."

Harry Lloyd, a rather poor dancer, but quite a brilliant student and athletic in appearance, marked his name down for two dances. Three of Orsen's fraternity brothers managed to get introduced to Glad Ray, and each one later brought a friend, so eight more dances were taken and no vacancies left. Glad Ray, very grateful her dance program was filled, entered into the spirit of the evening with apparent enthusiasm. Way down in her heart, she rather suspected that Orsen might have had a hand in her sudden popularity, but none of her partners by look or word gave any such evidence. Glad looked so charming in her only silk party frock. Her hair hung in soft, pale, golden curls far down over her shapely shoulders. Just a bit of her velvety throat was visible at the neck of her dress. Her shapely arms, from their dimpled elbows to her finger tips, were bare.

The girls of her class nodded stiffly to Glad Ray, and most of the boys spoke tolerantly, but it was plainly apparent that the Freshmen had their in-

structions. Not one of the Freshmen boys asked Glad Ray to dance. Her partners were all visiting Junior or Senior boys, and most of them fraternity brothers of Orsen's. She was having such a good time, that this did not bother her until the tenth dance which she was just finishing with Grant Nichols, a stalwart, fine, manly looking chap. He and his class mates had come to the conclusion that jealousy had started the small talk. Behind a large group of ferns and palms, at one end of the long hall, sat an unseen but distinctly heard couple.

"I can't, for the life of me, see what the girl came for. I wouldn't want to come where I wasn't wanted, especially when I had been left off every committee. We have frozen her stiff, and yet she hangs on. You can see it's only the boys of the older classes who dance with her."

"She can't compare with you, Inga, and you should worry."

"Yes, I know, but I do hate to have to dance on the same floor with her type. It is awful to see my brother dancing with her."

Glad Ray was scarlet with humiliation, and she looked up into Grant Nichol's face with tears flooding her big brown eyes. Grant could stand it no longer.

"Please take me to a seat," pleaded Glad. We don't want to dance the encore."

"Not the encore; but I'm going to make somebody else dance." With this, he suddenly held up two

fingers and moved his arm in a wild, signal fashion to Orsen Anstrum who immediately left his partner standing dumb with surprise in the center of the hall. To Orsen, an emergency, fraternity signal meant immediate action.

"There is some insulting female roasting Glad Ray, and some yellow pup with this female giving a willing, ready ear. I heard it, and you both follow me slowly, for I am going behind the palms and step on those two snakes."

"Please—please—you promised me,—Orsen, please," Glad Ray pleaded frantically. Grant Nichols ignored Glad Ray's pathetic appeal, and Orsen took her by the arm and slowly followed Grant behind the palms, all three astounded at seeing Inga Anstrum in the arms of the slimiest cad in school.

"You female Judas, if you were a boy I'd choke you so you'd lose your tongue," cried Grant, quite forgetting Inga was Orsen's younger sister. L. Carter Westbern, her Freshman partner, turned pale but remained speechless with his arm about Inga.

"Yes," broke in Orsen, when he had recovered from the first shock. "You, Inga, can't find a REAL man for a beau, so you have to take the worst cad in school. Do you know that yellow kid hasn't brains enough to offer to fight,—he's a rotter—he is. We know him. He's a cheat at everything."

"Brother!" cried Inga.

"Don't 'Brother' me,—I am disgusted with you. To think that my sister would stab the finest girl in school because of jealousy, and follow it up with per-

mitting a simp like Westbern to kiss her. Bah! Rotten!" and Orsen rubbed his sleeve over his mouth in further effort to humiliate Inga.

"Please, I beg of you to take me home. If you don't, I'll go alone," Glad insisted.

"You stay and dance, Glad. Stick and show these boors we are proud of you," urged Grant.

"Please,—I appreciate it all so much,—but I am sick—please take me home," she begged.

"See, what you've done," roared Orsen. "Spoiled Glad Ray's fun, and mine too. I'll fix you, Westbern, for both kissing my sister and not being man enough to say a word in defense of your innocent classmate. You haven't made a hit with the male end of the Anstrum family, limpy L. Carter Westbern."

"I don't particularly— —care for—for Glad Ray," he stammered. "I want Inga."

"Oh, you sitter-on-the-fence! You shrimp! You yellow bum! Listen to him, Orsen, he hasen't the courage to say he does *not* like Glad Ray, 'cause he knows he *does,* and every other fellow does, and he's aware of that too. He wants to stand in with Inga and the other Freshmen. Some bird, you are Westbern! Some wheezy, yellow bird!"

"Come here, sis,—get your coat and hat, you are going home. Do you hear me?" commanded Orsen, indignantly.

"Please take Miss Ray home since she wants to go. I am satisfied right here," defied Inga.

"So your Willy-boy escort permits you to plead your

own cause, does he? Gee! He is some la-dee-dah, all right."

"I don't want a scene before the girls," whimpered Westbern. "Let's not have a fuss."

"Listen to the birdie sing," laughed Grant tauntingly. "Tweet! Tweet! Pretty birdie, don't lose your voice, or Inga won't know you're on earth. Pretty birdie!" Grant started to whistle a familiar strain from "Listen to the Mocking Bird."

The music for the eleventh dance had just started, Orsen grabbed Glad Ray in ownership fashion and sailed out on the dance floor. Grant's speech about "pretty birdie" had broken the ice, and Glad found courage to continue the remainder of the program. After dance number sixteen, which she had with Scott Eaton another Fraternity member, Glad discovered Inga sitting next to her. For an instant their eyes met, but in another moment Orsen was close by to claim Glad Ray's last two dances.

"Your 'Pretty Birdie' has flown, Sis,—you better get your things on and go home, for it's a cinch I'm not going to take you after the mess you made tonight."

"We will both walk home with Inga, before you take me to Mrs. Highland's, if you please," requested Glad Ray, sweetly.

"You forgiving angel!" and turning to his sister he added: "Note the sweet disposition this girl has,—you snob!"

"Please wait here, Inga. Don't mind Orsen. He is a bit angry. I feel all right now." Glad Ray smiled.

Inga did not reply, but she remained meekly waiting for her brother and his partner to finish their last two dances. When they returned, Glad took Inga's arm, but instantly Orsen resented this saying: "Inga, *you* take *Glad's* arm, and show these Freshmen, these snobby birdies, that you know a good and beautiful girl when you see one." Inga meekly obeyed, and all three went to get their wraps. As they turned down the wide staircase to the second floor a noisy gathering of High School boys were bumping and pushing. It looked like trouble.

"What's that? Look,—a fight!"

"Don't leave us Orsen, I'm afraid," cried Inga.

"Shut up. You girls sit here," and Orsen pointed to the highest step, while he went to the second floor landing to investigate. Grant Nichols saw him and cried out:

"Need you, old man. Nine Freshies to our four Frat men, and we need five at least. Westbern's dirty work."

Orsen needed no further invitation. He threw his coat to Inga, his collar, vest and tie to Glad Ray, gave a jerk to the belt of his trousers, and flew pell-mell into the fray. Legs, arms, grunts, kicks, bangs, slams, unintelligible language, the crashing of broken glass from transoms and doors, mussed up heads, torn shirts and trousers told the story. Every little while some Fraternity man would get in an extra hard wallop and sing out: "So much for the Frat boys,—eh, men?" or "Guess you won't start anything more over a girl. Take that! And that! And that!" Every "that" repre-

sented a well aimed blow. The cheers every now and then had echoed to the third floor where Principal Ryan, Professor Custer and one of the English teachers, Miss Ebeling, had played chaperons. All three reached the scene of the fight at the great finish. The five Frat men with bleeding faces, disheveled hair, torn clothes but beaming countenances, had just laid the ninth Freshman down like a broken tin soldier beside the other defeated eight.

L. Carter Westbern it seems had confided to eight of his classmates his version of the censure to which he had been subjected by Grant and Orsen. The eight decided to avenge the insult. In the upper class men they found their superiors. Each Frat man picked out two Freshmen, while the ninth first-year man, a husky football player, tackled Orsen. While the battle lasted it fairly sizzled and excitement reigned at white heat.

When the chaperons appeared, the Frat men had finished their labors and stood aside in whispering conference, waiting for the first-year men to pick up their disabled comrades. Poor Miss Ebeling almost fainted, but soon rallied and sent some girls for water and towels, at the same time looking over the disgruntled, bleeding faces of the nine Freshmen with the practiced eye of one who is accustomed to detecting guilt. Principal Ryan and Professor Custer faced the three Junior and two Senior Frat men, demanding an explanation. Grant Nichols and Orsen Anstrum fairly warred with each other to go back into school hitosry

and tell the origin of the feud. The three chaperons listened attentively and with reserved judgment, gazing first at the battered men, then at each other, as Orsen concluded:

"And you see, sir,—this school is against men kissing girls at our parties and that pup, Westbern, has about ruined the democratic morale of our splendid classes by encouraging the lying gossip concerning the sweetest girl we've ever had in school."

In spite of the disabled Freshmen, Mr. Ryan was proud of the stand the five upper class men had taken, but the dignity of the Central High had to be maintained, so he stated authoritively:

"I am horrified that such a disgraceful fight should take place inside of our great Institution, but I heartily commend your attitude of protection and respect for the wishes of the parents of our girls. This is Friday night. I shall expel you now, at eleven-thirty P. M., for exactly fifty-seven and one-half hours and reinstate you at the painful end of that period." None of the five Fraternity boys realized exactly when their punishment would end. Principal Ryan desired to impress them with his disapproval of fighting and his approval of their moral stand. The three chaperons held a short secret meeting and decided the result of the battle had been sufficient punishment for the freshmen. After they had returned to the corridors and ordred the students to leave, they congratulated the upper class men, and Grant's muddled brain finally discovered that the fifty-seven and one-half hours expulsion would end on Monday morning at the exact

hour to open school. The five men glanced up, sheepishly grinning at their chaperons, as they shook hands all around. Grant returned with Orsen and joined trembling Inga and Glad Ray,—the latter's naturally rose-petal-pink complexion having assumed the color of chalk.

"Oh, Orsen,—Grant,—you're both all bloody," exclaimed Inga.

"Bloody with glory, thank you. May I see you home, Inga? Your 'Pretty Birdie' can be seen but not heard at one of the local hospitals most any time tomorrow." He whistled mischieviously. Both boys laughed.

"Oh, boys, this is terrible," but Glad Ray's glistening eyes some way belied her words. "Terrible," she repeated.

"Terribly nice for us that we could stop the gossip. And that reminds me, declared Orsen, "now I have this all out of my system, I'll feel more like a brother to you, Inga. But hereafter sis, please show ma in what way she is wrong, by yourself being a real Anstrum democrat. Try to have the good old U. S. spirit, sis, and above everything don't be a snob. Kiss Glad Ray because you have discovered she's a *real* girl and true; will you?"

Without hesitation Inga put her plump little arms about Glad's shoulders, and softly kissed first Glad's eyes so hot from tears, and then the pretty lips.

"I am ashamed, dear Glad; this has been a dreadful lesson to me; and," she tried to keep the tears back, "I want to be your friend, forever."

"Thank you, Inga dear. Please forgive my foolish tears," she half sobbed, "I'll be able—to stop—in a minute," and as she gained somewhat better control, continued: "I have always known both you and Selma were dear, good girls in your hearts; and I love you both."

"Where do I come in, Glad?" coaxed Orsen.

"I am very proud of you, Orsen," confided Glad Ray, "I shall never forget how brave you were to-tonight."

"Will you kiss me, Glad, when we get to Highlands?" coaxed Orsen as he drew her arm within his.

"Maybe," whispered Glad.

CHAPTER XIX.

DURING the turbulent days of her romance with Raymond Hallaway, the birth of Glad Ray, her marriage to the Judge and the latter's death, Gladys Longworth Breckenridge had little time or inclination to reflect on the mysteries of creation or listen to the persistent voice of Conscience. Blind, her child lost, stolen or dead, the heart-broken mother considered the pitiful separation a merciless punishment for the violation of the moral code. For more than a year private detectives searched every corner of the globe for a trace of the guardian and the precious child of love.

Mrs. Allen was last seen by a cab driver who had driven a woman, holding a crying baby, toward the depot. She had paid her fare, hugged the child to her bosom and disappeared in the darkness. He thought she made her way to the depot, but said it was possible she entered another cab and took a train from another station. At neither station did the agent recall the purchase of a ticket by a woman of Mrs. Allen's description.

For many months the detectives shadowed Dr. Raymond Hallaway. It was learned he too was making a still hunt for the child and his former sweetheart, believing others knew more than they were telling.

A number of futile efforts were made to blackmail

the helpless widow by the detectives in her employ. Once she paid a large sum for information which proved worthless. As a means of protection she hired two perfectly good eyes when Miss Madge Weeks became her social secretary. As her strength improved the patient left the wheel chair and, with the aid of Miss Weeks and a slender cane, frequently walked about the estate.

From shrewd investments under the wise direction of Judge Dibbell, Gladys was able to treble her income and indulge in charity work, particularly in the hospitals for blind and cripple children. This occupation was her one pleasure. Very seldom she attended to the donations personally, more frequently she left it to Miss Weeks. At other times she had the matron, or head of the institution about to receive the donation, call at "The Maples," the old Breckenridge homestead. "The Maples" was now, by the will of the late Judge, the legacy of Gladys. None of her later acquaintances knew Gladys by any name other than "Mrs. Breckenridge." Checks were signed "Mrs. G. L. Breckenridge." This had been Judge Dibbell's advice. To her girlhood friends Gladys was now unknown, and not associating the name of Longworth with her married one, persons who read of, or were interested in, charities which became public, never connected the two names. In one way this was unbounded relief to the widow; in another she feared silence concerning the past might hamper Mrs. Allen in her search for the infant's mother.

As the years passed, hundreds of sufferers blessed

the respected name of their blind benefactor. Each bequest she granted, Gladys felt was one of love and atonement to make her more worthy the return of her daughter. Not for a moment did she give up hope. After seventeen years of humble and loving service, Gladys received from the general public of Louisville the name: "Angel of the Crippled and Blind." As her income multiplied, her charities assumed the same wide range. Except garden and house parties for afflicted babies and the genuinely deserving poor, "The Maples" was never opened for a single social season. Society that type which only lives to consume time and occupy space had absolutely no attraction for Gladys Breckenridge. The jingle, tinsel, sham and hypocrisy disguested the sensitive nature which feasted on doing things worth while, alleviating the sufferings of others, and using time to the glory of spiritual progression.

Even in her blindness, men and women were not without the realization of the widow's grace and beauty. Her hair was slightly touched with silver, making Gladys all the more attractive. The years stood lightly against her pink flesh, leaving it the delicate velvety tone of youth. Her figure, too, retained its good proportions, and although she dressed with marked simplicity, every gown was in excellent taste and appropriate to the place and hour. She wore no jewels other than the narrow wedding ring and the two carat solitaire engagement ring which the Judge had given her during their honeymoon in St. Louis.

Believers in the theory of the Law of Compensation will find in Gladys a new proof. Pity for the blind

woman, always gave way to an abiding love when new acquaintances discerned her wonderful Spiritual perception. When it appeared that locating her daughter might require years, the widow turned to the Bible for consolation. Miss Weeks was requested to read the first and second chapters of Genesis to her time and time again.

"Please read to me, Verse 27, Chapter I," Gladys would request, and Miss Weeks most graciously complied.

" 'So God created man in His Own Image, in the Image of God created He him.' "

"If God created man in His Own Image," she would muse, "then man must have been infinitely perfect,—that is, not the mortal man we understand as flesh, but the Spiritual or Immortal man. I love to analyze that verse as all my earlier years were spent in ignorance of the dissimilarity between mortal and immortal. I could not comprehend the difference between 'His Own Image' as written in the Scriptures, and the mortal flesh, which I see with material sense. From my more mature understanding of that sacred verse much has been cleared for me. Inasmuch as I cannot see, touch or feel God, He must be Spiritual. Then if 'I' am born in His Image, the immortal 'I' must also be spiritual."

"Well," thoughtfully responded Miss Weeks," the old quotation holds good: 'As a man thinketh, so is he.' "

"That is also true; and I want to think of my baby as Spiritual too, that there may be a Oneness with God,

and some day I may win her mortal forgiveness for my own sin."

Patiently the widow and her secretary toiled, sometimes far into the night, searching first in the old testament, then in the new. The life and works of Jesus seemed to grip her, and yet the lonely, blind widow would say:

"All mankind really wants to be good, and yet look what happened to the best Man who ever lived! I shudder when I think of the terrible material punishment a mother visits on her offspring born out of wedlock."

"Yes,—and there is the Law of Compensation, of adjustment—atonement," Miss Weeks analyzed from her personal viewpoint.

"That is the pitiful part of mortal consciousness, where there is little comfort. The Spiritual growth I have been able to attain from the Bible has proven a reasonable panacea. Don't you think it is possible for one to emerge gradually from limited material knowledge into unlimited Spiritual understanding? Isn't it possible to overcome illusions or mistakes through knowledge of the Bible and it's Truth?"

"Yes," the secretary responded.

The lonely mother was only musing, and did not expect her questions to be answered.

Having once perceived there is no selfishness or limitation in God, it was not difficult for Gladys Breckenridge to reason that there could be *no loss in God*. She also decided there could be no excuse, or reason, or truth, in denying the Eternal Perfection and

Completeness of all things Good; and that nothing God creates can be anything else than Good; and therefore anything Good *cannot be lost,* whether it is one's material vision or one's child. This, she decided, because God once Creating anything *always Creates Perfectly* and once and for all *"IT IS GOOD."* Finally, she soliloquized: *All Creation endures and progresses throughout Eternity;* that there is no limit to knowledge; nothing created ever dies; and that Life is Everlasting. Gladys gradually realized, although her daily lessons had been testing ones and of long standing, that: "Joy cometh in the morning;" and finally, that the Natural Laws of Compensation are Absolute, Invariable, and Perfect.

> "Without social crucifixions, illusive sorrow and mortal pain, we frequently fail to perceive the Eternal Presence of God in Whose Love, limitations, selfishness, inconsiderations or distortions of any kind cannot exist."

In after years Gladys came to the conclusion that Raymond Hallaway had needed sympathy and understanding from his mate, and decidedly more tact because of his anxiety over responsibilities, education, lack of funds, shabby clothes, and an irritable disposition. She had failed to appreciate and analyze the cravings of his impulsive nature and realized her lack of diplomacy had ignited many a quarrel between them.

She had passed thru numerous material changes since the days of her impulsive youth. But for her Spiritual research work, with the aid of Miss Weeks, Gladys would have given way to remorse. During the very early stages of her motherhood, idleness

caused her imaginary troubles, suspicion and supersensitiveness. Following this came a period of stubbornness and retaliation: Then she married Judge Breckenridge. A few months later the death of the Judge caused a crucial awakening. The news of her baby girl's mysterious disappearance, added to the torture of anticipated blindness, was gradually followed by the realization, as she phrased it: *"that all material conditions are as nothing;* also, that God or Truth cannot be distorted or aborted. *TRUTH IS;* just as *God Is;* and the *Wisdom of God is Infinite."*

Prior to the year that the blinding cataracts were completely developed, Gladys had finally perceived the *merciful Truth in the Immortality of Love.* She understood once and for all, though Raymond had many material faults of the flesh, nevertheless, he possessed the same Spiritual blessings to which she was heir; and to that IMMORTAL YOU, known to Gladys as Hallaway, was given her undying love.

Certainly never before, and never since, had Gladys experienced the same absolute submissiveness, or the perfect oneness-in-love as visited her soul on the night she accepted her student-lover. She had respected, almost revered, Judge Breckenridge; but the supreme mate-hood emotion she knew, too late, was given the father of her baby. Through impulse, faith, trust and love "Glad Ray" was born.

How frequently the lonely blind woman soliloquized on a mother's first-born. She believed most often the first child to be a manifestation of mutual love and truth; the mother's absolute unity with the life of the

father; their united oneness in mind, unselfishness, desire and devotion. At least, Gladys trusted this should be the only manner of conception under any circumstances, whether it proved the first-born or the fifth.

There can be no IDEALS too high for perfect conception. There must be ever borne in mind that Propagation is a part of Creation; and that Creation being of God, and God being Divine, therefore Propagation is Spiritual and a proof of Divine Wisdom. With this thought, *conception becomes a Spiritual transition* and a *perfect manifestation of mutual love, truth and Infinite Creation.*

When Gladys married Judge Thomas Breckenridge she sincerely appreciated his generous protection, and honored him for his tenderness, proving herself worthy of his abiding trust. However, she made no pretense in relation to a passionate love she did not possess. The venerable jurist opened a respectable harbor for her child, and in youthful inconsistency Gladys felt that he was her last honorable opportunity and social refuge.

Through mistaken desperation she forgot that men like Doctor Hallaway frequently become apparently indifferent, when in reality it is not so much a lessening of affections as thoughtlessness in believing a woman should know once and for all that she is loved, not requiring the exertion of daily demonstration.

When Miss Weeks was busy with correspondence Gladys would sit hour after hour with plenty of opportunity for contemplation. Often, her mind would re-

vert to Raymond, the student and interne, as she last saw him. His ardent wooing and assuring sentiments came back to her as clearly out of the past as though he had actually been by her side. Again Gladys listened to her lover's voice, and gazed on his splendid presence as distinctly as though she could truly see him with her sightless eyes, and live again those moments gone beyond recall.

Thus the old memories were frequently revived as Gladys daydreamed, alone in her blindness, trying to fathom the secrets of the silence, the depths of the darkness, and recall the features of those most dear to her.

Because Gladys Longworth Breckenridge had experienced mortal bitterness to its fullest, she also discovered the kindest remedies and the perfect panacea.

Because she had missed love in its most glorious form, then wifehood, and later been deprived of her motherhood, she realized the absolute necessity of Spiritual Truth for those in like misery.

Often Gladys retraced life's numerous steps and missteps and in doing so, recalled the crucial hour in which she revealed to Raymond the coming of the child.

"Are you positive, darling?" he had asked.

"Yes, Raymond, I am." It was sublime to share with him her precious secret.

"My wonderful, little wife! What a perfect woman-soul is yours! My dream-child shall live!" He had drawn her to him, saying as he did so: "I must touch you delicately, tenderly, adoringly, for you are willing to pass through pitiful suffering, and even privation

if necessary, to become the most sacred of God's gifts, —A Mother. Have you no fear, beloved?"

"There is no fear; there is only love," she had affirmed.

Then came the years of suspense, pain, humiliation helplessness and contrition.

Once Gladys asked Miss Weeks to look in the City directory for Doctor Raymond Hallaway's location. When his residence address and telephone number were found she was satisfied to learn he was still in Louisville, but her own blindness kept her from permitting him to find out she was among the living, or that she desired to speak with him.

Another time she requested Miss Weeks to cautiously inquire about the Doctor, his practice and reputation. When her secretary had quietly gathered sufficeint information, the blind woman's heart was rejoiced by learning of the esteem in which the father of her little girl was held by the public, and in certain Hospitals. She listened with silent but human satisfaction to the news that Doctor Hallaway had never married. It took more than ordinary courage not to call him over the 'phone, just to hear his voice once more, and without replying, hang up the receiver.

With material sight gone, the baby passed out or apparently lost, there appeared little left for Gladys Breckenridge to do save to distribute words of cheer, perform deeds of kindness and live the life of unselfish love she so yearned to share with those near and dear to her heart.

CHAPTER XX

FOR MORE than fourteen years Big Jack Sullivan had guarded the one secret of his life. There were times when he longed to tell his faithful Susan, —to take her into the depths of the forest far from the world of men and whisper what he knew. Then it seemed the very trees might hear. There were other times when he determined to carry his secret to the grave. As the years sped on and Glad ripened into womanhood the secret was always troubling Jack. Some day Glad would love a man. He would propose marriage. Then he must tell and the roses, he thought, would fade from her cheeks and her merry laughter die. She would wither like a flower and the wrinkles come. The secret concerned the birth of Glad. Years before when the iron trunk containing the child's belongings had been carried to the attic Jack had known. In delving through the little one's treasures, packed so carefully by her mother, he had found the letter. His one desire was to find some trace of the parents of the waif, as he knew the child did not belong to Stella Allen or the Allen family. One day he had steamed open the personal missive addressed to Glad to be read on her eighteenth birthday. His first impulse was to destroy the letter. For hours he pondered over the question. Now the time was near

when he must decide. He could still spare Glad the shame, humiliation and unnecessary suffering by keeping the secret of her birth. There would be nothing wrong in that, he thought. But if she would want to marry,—well the man should know.

Glad did not evince interest in the type of young men who visited the Tavern. Occasionally a dapper young chap from the city would try to make advances but the girl's intuition protected her and she remained heart whole. After she returned from Duluth and high school, with the books chosen for her by Mrs. Highland, she found her greatest diversion from household work in study. For hours she would read and think and write. Why she jotted down her thoughts she did not know. She always insisted to Uncle Jack and Aunt Susan that she was more inspired and learned more in close communion with the woods and streams than she did even from her books. This delighted the aging couple whose only schooling was the university of hard knocks and who feared the effect of loneliness on their ward.

Tourist season was coming again and Uncle Jack was wondering. Some of these days, he was thinking, the right man will come along and pick "our wild rose." He dreaded the day he would have to relate the entire secret. Gruff, hardened, bitter at times, the woodsman had the heart of a child. He could not inflict pain, and deep down in his heart there was a love of God and man no visitor to the woods ever had uncovered. He had an unusual faith in justice and the right. It did not seem fair that this beautiful girl

should suffer for a sin she knew nothing about. It was bad enough to be a foundling but had even the Anstrums ever surmised the real truth, Glad would have been a social outcast. He had saved the child, and he meant to spare the young woman as long as possible.

There was a letter left for him on the bar early one bright morning that kept him thinking seriously. He seemed to know a shadow was about to fall across Pike Lake Tavern.

"Got a letter here from a feller livin' in the Rocky Mountains, Susan," he began, "who's agoin' to send his 'dopted son out here to Pike Lake woods fer pine air, fishin' en 'scen'ry. He sez thet he's a painter and visited here hizself years ago."

"I haint never hed no likin' fer what-you-call-ems? Artists? I'd rether give me best room to that prim pick-up o' ourn, Glad Ray," and Susan Sullivan's voice rasped out its customary nagging retort, as she thought of the "extre wurk." "What's tha feller's father's name, Jack?" she asked by way of showing more interest in the expected boarder.

"The father's name ez 'Carston Ronning', an' that boy's name ez—let's see," and again Jack Sullivan adjusted his glasses to search through the letter for the lad's name. "Ahem. Front name's plain 'John'—plain 'John Ronning'."

"Hesn't got sech a fancy name ez his father, hez he?"

"Nope, but I like it a heap better," and old Sullivan filled his foul smelling pipe.

"Call thet pick-up gel," rasped Susan. "Where ez

she, innyway? I vow she's readin' some of thim there ol' fool books o' hern 'bout Soul en Beauty, en One Mind with God, en' the likes o' sech truck. Ivvery time she draws her wages, 'cause she gits duds from you, she ups an' spends her dollar a week fer fool books thet fill 'er top with sech stuff ez I niver hearn tell of. I onct told her, sez I, thet I got on all thez years without thim high-soundin' noshuns en new fangled idees, en ez they would'h buy shooze fer her feet; but jist b'lieve me, she ez the bull-headest critter under her yaller top thet I ivver see. Ef she wa'n't kind o' pertty en' the like en mixed drinks well, I'd o' sint her hoofin' fer 'erself long time past. Thet gel's no earthly good et scrubbin' ner washin'!" Susan snapped her thin lips together, knowing all the time she loved Glad Ray in her rough, honest way.

"Peers to me she makes beds all right, shines the glasses, enkeeps th' bar cleaner'n most inny help we ivver hed 'fore she growed big 'nough to work fer her dollar spendin' money." Jack Sullivan puffed a bit harder on his old corn-cob pipe.

"Ef you hedn't allus stuck fer her, I'd o' sint 'er out tha orfint's farm, whur she b'longs; but you got sum kind o' ideees en religion, thet you thot Stella Allen 'ed o' rizzed out o' her grave ef you din't keep Glad 'bout here."

"She don't do no harm, nohow, Susan, ol gel. She ez moighty good-lookin' too, en holds trade at tha bar."

"I nivver see sech a ol' boob as you be innyway; you kin see the pattern o' a woomin's stockins a mile

away; you kin find a pertty face on a woomin thet ez a cross 'tween a fat punkin en a crooked tack." Susan jerked her head with a set air.

"Susan!"

"Yep! Thet's thru! Simps! Ol' fools,—most men your age."

"Thar's minny a hunter thet steers this a' way jist to see Glad Ray's big brown eyes, picter face, en golden curls, I reckon." Great rings of grey smoke rose above Sullivan's head as he tried in his crude way to defend his ward.

"I kin't see ez how she's orfully pertty, Jack."

"Wall, you don't like to see 'er 'tall, inny ways, so no use arguin' 'bout thet."

"Wheres the yaller top now? Hid in her attic room I jist bet. O' she's some wurker, she ez! Git a move on you an' call her to fix tha big spare room."

"All right, Susan, ef youh'll stop pickin' on 'er, I will. She hez bin here since she wuz a baby 'bout three year ol,' I reckin; now, ez she ez almost a young woman, she'll up en git out; thin you'll hev to put a stranger into harness, ef you don't larn to hol' yer tongue a bit."

"Hol' yourn, en call tha high-tone reeder o' tha family." Susan went into the pantry to see if Glad Ray had eaten more than her share of prunes,—Glad's favorite dish.

"'Glad?' Be ye up in yer room, gel?"

"Yes, Uncle Jack. Am I needed now?" came the sweet response.

"Cum on down, gel. Yer Aunt sez, sez she, thet you

air to fix up the big spare room in the lake wing o' th' house, fer a new boarder thet 'ez comin'."

"Yes, Uncle," and the beautiful face was effulgent with the same irreststible smile which had won Jack Sullivan completely when a baby.

"Wearin' those same ol' shooze, gel?"

"Yes, Uncle Jack; you see if I sent for my new book on 'Philosophy of Living,' I couldn't buy my shoes. The book means more to me than shoes. You won't mind, will you? You dear, old uncle!" Glad Ray slipped her arm about the stooped shoulders of the only kind friend she had ever known.

"Nope, nivver. But, I don't know what yer Aunt Susan'll say, gel." The old man sat down on the attic stairs and refilled his pipe.

"If it were not for you, Uncle Jack, I'd have run away long, long ago." The "pick-up" snuggled close to her protector. "If Aunt Susan had a child of her own she would be different, I'm sure," Glad apologized.

"Too thru,—to thru, gel; but she ez my wife, Susan ez, en we'll try en take quite a bit o' back talk 'fore we kick, won't we, gel?" he answered defendingly, "Susan's a good woomin."

"Yes, Uncle, she *is* a good woman, and I love her too, and we will take any amount of scoldings and know she means well."

So saying, Glad Ray went to her homely duties singing hopefully, if not cheerfully, while old Sullivan returned to the kitchen to "fetch" in wood and put over the "kittle" for his wife.

"Thought you'd got caught on a hook in the attic, or was listenin' to the pick-up readin' her fool stuff; it sure took you an' age to do ez I told yuh," and Susan pulled the thin peelings from the cold boiled potatoes with a jerk.

"Nope, jist set on tha attic stairs a bit to finish my pipe."

"Got a extree basement to yuhr pipe, I reckon. You an' your pipe ortter be en tha woodshed fetchin' in thet wood." She cast a glaring look in her husband's direction. "How do you' spec tha kittle tuh bile? By settin, on tha attic stairs?"

"Nope, gentle dove," and Sullivan dodged a cold potato.

"Got clean towels and sech in tha spare room, 'Glad'?" she inquired as her ward entered the kitchen. Mrs. Sullivan's voice was not pitched quite so high as usual.

"Yes, Aunt Susan, it is all sweet and tidy." Glad started to set the table for tea.

"Moighty long toime fixin' up tha room. What was you doin'?"

"After I made the room clean and neat I sat down and read a little in my new book."

"Readin', eh? Readin' in tha spare room?"

"Yes, Aunt, I was reading." Glad continued to arrange the table as artistically as she could with a colored cloth and cutlery which had lost its plate several years before.

"Why did you want to read en tha spare room, you yaller-headed book-worm."

"The more harmonious the room, the more harmonious is one's mind, and altogether one is in better poise to receive the truths of the great writers." Glad Ray did not raise her eyes while she tried to define her preference for an atmosphere of refinement and cleanliness.

"Indade! Sech fool noshuns! Ef your own eyes kint read yuhr hoigh-toned books in inny ol' place, en git tha same idees, ets all bunk, so et ez. You nivver larnt sech readin' until afther you graduwaited from tha grammar school. Sure, en I think you got tha noshuns from meetin' some of the good-fer-nothin's thet come up yer ta shott 'n fish; thim critters thet hez toime to burn, en a heap more money than brains. You'll larn to bake better pies in tha kitchen then you will in tha spare room. I reckon yuh kin git to wurk en fry these taters for a beginnin'."

Jack Sullivan made considerable noise with the woodbox he was filling, and pretended not to hear to drown his wife's nagging warble. He had pretended frequently of late that his hearing was failing, so old Susan's sharp tongue could rattle until it was weary, and there would be no quarrel.

"You Uncle Jack ez sure gittin' deefer 'n deefer, I do vow." Susan proceeded to open a jar of wild raspberries for the finishing touch to their evening meal.

After Glad Ray had washed up the dishes, she set the table nearest the east window in the kitchen ready for breakfast as the "paintin' feller," was expected to arrive in time for the morning meal; and

about eleven o'clock went up to her humble attic bedroom where she lighted a candle, balancing it on a broken saucer, and opened one of her favorite books.

For a moment she scanned a page, then the book dropped to her lap. She surveyed the barren attic. Flickering shadows danced like spirits. A gust of wind blew out the candle. Through the attic window she could see the quarter moon. From below came the sounds of coarse laughter as ribald stories were told. Accidentally Glad stumbled over the old iron trunk. She lighted the candle once more, and contemplated the contents. It contained the Sullivan family papers, the ancestral silver, a few paintings, but nothing tangible to Glad Ray. She began to ponder over the affairs of her foster uncle and Aunt Susan. They had been young once, too. They must have loved as others love. Now they were growing old, and they were cross, thought Glad. Why are people like that? Will I be cross and old? Is hatred an outgrowth of love? Of course not. Will I ever love? Perhaps, but who would love a waif,—a woman who could tell nothing about her parents. Who was my mother anyway? Is she alive? And my father? Are they old and cross? Musing, half thinking aloud, Glad Ray sat far into the night.

Time and again, long after her foster parents were asleep, Glad would sit thinking about her past and dream about the future. The puzzle of her birth and parentage grew less important as she began to understand the fatherhood of God. One night she found the passage in the new testament where the Mas-

ter asked: "Who is my brother?" Glad pondered and then she just seemed to know that the real Glad Ray was a child of *Nature,* on earth by HIS WILL, and *just as good as any other girl.* Having reached this decision there came a consciousness of strength so new to her that she would sit in awe trying vainly to grasp the problems of the Infinite. She saw no reason for unhappiness when there was so much good and so many beautiful things in the world. She realized her trouble at high school had been because she had not faced her enemies and overcome their malice and resentment through love and service. Laying her book aside, Glad reached for her note book, reading pages of her closely written manuscript. She realized she was nearing her eighteenth birthday. Leaning on the table as she wrote, she made this notation:

> "Dear Father and Mother: I am almost eighteen. I do not know who you are or where. I love you both. You could not have deserted me and left me to die because you must certainly have been good parents. All things are good; and all good is eternal. You seem so near. How I yearn for you tonight. Some day the mystery of it all will be made clear to me."
>
> Your own Glad Ray.

The moon had passed out of her vision hours before. Lost in reverie she did not note the passing of time but it seemed to be growing light outside when she finally turned down the ragged comfort, and smoothed the sheet. The candle had burned low and she snipped it only to sit back in her chair again. The world seemed so still and peaceful that the distant patter of horse's hoofs sounded like a troop of cavalry. Nearer

and nearer the night driver came. She could not understand why any traveler would be coming to the tavern at this unheard of hour, but she did not feel alarmed. Then buggy wheels grated on the gravel below as the team came to a full stop. Out of the night came the cheerful:

"H-e-l-l-o, H-e-l-l-o!"

All nervousness vanquished as Glad crept to her tiny window to see who the cheerful stranger might be. She knew Uncle Jack would soon be at the door with his feigned gruff voice at being awakened, but she also knew that cheery "H-e-l-l-o" would win him over. Anxiously she waited. Finally the door below opened, the glare of Uncle Jack's lantern hit the rig full and out stepped a tall, broad shouldered youth. The ray of light flashed on his features a moment and Glad beheld a smile she never forgot.

CHAPTER XXI.

"IRON John" made the Harvard team during his freshman year. The coach and student body picked him as the rising foot ball star of a decade. He played at right half on the second team and made such persistent advances through the regular line that the coach determined to use him in the minor games if the faculty would consent to a freshman smashing a college regulation. During the training season the coach laid him off the second eleven time and again under the pretense of teaching him the mysteries of the place kick. The real reason however was to give some of the regular line men a chance to heal their bruises.

In the class room "Iron John" won early season honors and attracted the attention of tutors under whom he doubled in some of the minor courses. The rising athlete soon swung into the college ways and became so popular he was elected class president, an unusual distinction for a westerner. All honors sat easily on the broad shoulders of this born leader of men. Perfectly at home in a drawing room or on the football field, "Iron John" did not balk at any activity open to a freshman, with the single exception that he refused to play the mandolin. He declared his greatest specialty was his unusual capacity for ham and eggs. At the training table every morning the master of cere-

monies would nod to the athletes, every head would bow in the mock ceremony of grace, and a deep solemn voice would exclaim,

"Please pass the eggs."

For four years the jest continued and "Iron John" ran true to form. During his Harvard career of law and athletics the distinction that seemed to please the college star more than all the medals was his reputation as an egg eater. Imagine the surprise of John Ronning, however, on the morning after his arrival at the Pike Lake Tavern when the most musical voice he ever had heard, inquired:

"Will you have some more eggs, sir?"

Looking up in amazement he gazed into a pair of wonderful, soft, brown eyes that seemed to hold him, and the cheerful smile fled leaving his face crimson. He, "Iron John," completely bowled over by "a skirt," —it was enough to make the strongest blush.

"Excuse me, Venus," he stammered, "I'll tell you the story and you will understand."

The golden head nodded approvingly and John Ronning for the first time beheld the beautiful features of this wild flower of the forest.

"Please not now," smiled Glad Ray, "I've got to wash the dishes."

"Sweet roses by the old garden gate," thought John, "a cheerful dishwasher! Well, she can wash my china for life."

John Ronning had come to the pine woods of Minnesota to relax after the final examinations at Har-

vard. He wanted to fish, tramp through the forests, and plan his future. He had a fine start.

"Eggs?" he heard the sweet voice repeat.

"Yes," he replied with emphasis, "bring twelve in relays of one each."

Glad was charmed with the stranger's manner, his good humor and even the color of his flannel shirt. She did not lose her poise for a moment, but with mock seriousness carried out his order and presented a check for services. She did refuse his generous tip, however, with a little tremor in her voice that won his admiration.

Giving the stranger time to ponder over the wonders of Nature, she left the room to return a few moments later laden with an armful of wild cherry blossoms which she arranged in an old fashioned pitcher on the table before him.

Wonderful, indeed, was the mass of wavy golden hair brushed away from shapely temples, and dressed loosely over her lovely neck. Her complexion was far from possible on canvas; the only artist able to do justice to the quick changes of pink and cream which came and went in her wonderful face was the Creator, Himself. The lithe, girlish figure was clad in a discarded waist of her Aunt's, an old cast-off skirt, and a simple blue and white gingham apron. The waist was open at the throat, and loose sleeves ended just above the dimpled elbows.

"Are you,—pardon me,—but are you the daughter of the owner?" Ronning quite forgot the last egg and slice of bacon which had grown cold. He was even



"AN ARMFUL OF WILD CHERRY BLOSSOMS"

rude in his surprised admiration of the vision before him. Glad Ray turned and faced the new boarder, as she answered timidly:

"No, sir, Mr. Sullivan is my—is my adopted Uncle. I am an orphan as far as I know."

Thinking possibly her response had been to confiding, she busied herself with the blossoms.

"An orphan, did you say?"

"So far as I know," Glad Ray repeated, and embarrassed by the questioning, honest gaze of the stranger, she backed away and overturned one of the heavy wooden chairs which caused old Susan to open the kitchen door with a jerk.

"What hev you busted now, you yaller-headed orfint?" she shouted. Seeing John Ronning, Susan slammed the door without waiting for a reply.

"Who is that?" John inquired. He assisted the trembling girl to get the chair on its unsteady legs, as he glared toward the kitchen.

"She is my adopted Aunt,—Aunt Susan." Flushed and humiliated, Glad tried to back out of the room as quickly as possible.

"She roars like a lion," he exclaimed in disgust. "I beg your pardon, if I have appeared rude. I did not mean to stare at you so, but—but—" He never completed that sentence for fear she would doubt his sincerity, but forgot his good manners by exclaiming: "That woman's voice is like a sharp buzz-saw, and her method of investigation,—"

"Please do not notice it. Aunt Susan is my Uncle Jack's wife. He is my only friend,—the kindest man

I ever knew. She means to be kind, too,—really she does, but something sharpened her tongue. You can't always realize her goodness because of the hasty words which escape her lips."

Glad Ray's defense of her Aunt did not fail to impress young Ronning, and the beautiful girl became more wonderful to him.

"Do you ever walk through the pine woods?" he asked.

"I work most of the time, and when not working I run away to my room in the attic to read my books,—they are such good company."

"Paragon of paragons! And you live here in these forests?"

"Yes, why not? Uncle Jack and I love every bit of this wild and rugged country."

"Please may I inquire your name?"

"Miss Ray, sir," she replied, fumbling with some broken cherry blossom twigs. "My full name is Glad Ray." She lowered her large, brown eyes modestly.

For the first time John Ronning noticed that the girl's eyelashes were long and silky. He had heard of hair-dressing shops producing brown-eyed blondes, but here was Nature's own lavish handiwork, and nothing missing from the picture.

"'Glad Ray?' What a lovely name! There should be something in common between us, Miss Ray, if you will permit the suggestion. I am an orphan also. I was adopted by an artist and his wife about fifteen years ago. It might be interesting if we exchanged

stories about our adoption. Would you like to walk this afternoon?"

"I would go if it were possible but,—well, I never go out with anyone with the exception of Aunt Susan and Uncle Jack. You see they pay me one dollar a week for my services, and I must keep busy to earn the money and my clothes."

Clothes! If the faded outfit she wore at that moment was a good sample, he did not doubt the poor girl earned all she received.

"Should it be necessary to have a guide through the woods for a few days, to whom shall I go, Miss Ray?"

"Ask Uncle Jack, and he will assign someone to you. He frequently supplies guides for the hunters and fishermen who come here from all over the state."

"Will you please shake hands with me? My name is John Ronning, and I am anxious to be friends, if you will permit."

"Thank you," and she wiped her calloused palm on her apron before offering it to the affable stranger.

"There, now we are friends, aren't we? You needn't feel afraid of me. I am new to these woods, and unknown to you, but come from a respectable home and honorable foster parents whose name I will forever respect."

He still held her hand, as he looked into the depths of her lovely dark eyes. A great sigh of satisfaction escaped Glad Ray's lips as she silently received the confidence. At that moment, Aunt Susan again opened the kitchen door and thrust her beak-like face into full view.

"Now what air you up to? Tryin' to foller the steps of thim females thet cum up yer 'n carreeges with the husbuns of other females? I bet yuh alive thet you air makin' a date."

"Aunt Susan! Please don't—please don't speak so!" Glad Ray covered her crimson face with her toil worn hands.

"I beg your pardon, madam, but I asked the young lady her name, introduced myself, and was shaking hands with her when you opened the door," exclaimed Ronning.

"Don't try to make inny excuses to me,—see? I hev met the likes o' yous before." Without further argument, Susan again vanished, banging the door behind her.

In an attempt to relieve the embarrassing situation, John Ronning walked leisurely into the barroom which also served as an office for the Tavern. Jack Sullivan was lifting a stove-length of log into the old air-tight heater.

"Great weather you people are having up here in the pine forests,—a most perfect Spring—wild cherry blossoms and all."

"Yep. We like ev'ry part o' the year. Smells of young pine most of the time up here. Notice it? You hev foine air en tha mountains, too, eh?" He offered a chair to his guest and split a pint bottle of cold root beer.

"Thanks. Ah,—great." The younger man smacked his lips. "Yes, we have plenty of bracing air. Where my father has his ranch he has low mountains of rocks

and straggling under-nourished oaks—and in between are acres of plateaus of meadow grass and tall fine forest trees, but there is very little pine in our vicinity. Dad thought I needed to rest my nerves in this Minnesota air for a few weeks. Been grinding law into my brains rather hard of late."

"Studyin' as how ta keep out o' jail, eh?"

"Rather, how to keep the other man out, I trust; and how to save his neck." John smiled good-naturedly.

"Will you shtart pertty soon?" Jack Sullivan had always held a profound respect for lawyers since, several years before, he had been obliged to engage one who successfully defended him.

"I hope to open an office for myself this winter, after I visit down South in Kentucky where my foster mother was born."

"My wife's people en some o' mine, was onc't livin' down thet a'ways."

Ronning didn't care where the ancestors of the shrew, Susan, lived. The present concerned him far more, so the subject was adroitly changed.

"How do you manage to keep the trail about these woods, and find the best places for fishing and hunting?"

"Wall,—I ginerly kin git a guide fer tha boarders," and he pressed a button on the bar near where they were standing. In less than a minute Glad Ray stood in the doorway.

"May I do something for you, Uncle?"

"Yes, gel, fix up a 'house-special' fer tha young man." He motioned to the whiskey decanter.

"Pardon me, but I never drink anything stronger than tea, coffee or soft drinks." Ronning glanced in the direction of the vision whose face was a picture of satisfaction as she listened to his refusal.

"Nivver?" Sullivan looked his boarder over as though he were a freak.

"Never," he responded kindly, but positively.

"Wall, you miss a powerful foine drink whin you don't take whut tha gel kin mix fer you." The Tavern owner rubbed his coarse hands on his stomach as though he were experiencing the false delights of the stimulant at that moment.

"I've no doubt but it would be extra fine if your niece mixed it, but,—well I just don't care for drink at all."

Glad Ray stood transfixed with admiration that at least one man couldn't be influenced or coddled into drinking, when old Sullivan's gruff voice suddenly brought her back to reality.

"Gel, how w'd yuh loike to act ez 'guide' fer Mister Ronning, today? Carryin' a basket o' grub, en tha pot to bile tha coffee en, 'long with yuh?" Turning to his boarder, he added: "Can't think o' innybody in these yer parts what ez not right busy this mornin,' so I think you kin carry tha gun en she kin carry tha eats. How ez it wid you, gel?"

"Just as you wish, Uncle Jack, I know all the trails, and would love to go for a long hike on such a perfect morning."

This was exactly what both young people secretly desired, but neither one wished to make it noticeable to the other, and particularly to the owner of Pike Lake Tavern.

"That would suit me nicely, I can assure you, if the young lady wouldn't become too tired." John Ronning glanced at Glad Ray with an expression of forced indifference.

"She'll travel twiced ez fur ez you 'fore she gits tired, won't yuh, gel?"

"Uncle means that I could possibly go over the trail twice to your once because I am accustomed to labor and walking, while you are not."

"We will see, Miss Ray. How soon before we start?" And the college athlete smiled at the inconsistent comparison of this graceful girl's physical strength with his own.

"I will grind the coffee and pack the lunch immediately, and we can be gone in thirty minutes."

"Hurry along, gel,—Mr. Ronning will be afther wantin' tuh try hez luck et shootin'."

Glad Ray left the room with a smile on her lips difficult to suppress.

"Don't know ez how I'd git along widout thet gel. She ez tha 'hole world o' sunshine to me." The old man lighted his corn-cob pipe and puffed hard on it.

"She is the most beautiful girl I have ever seen." Ronning was sincere in every word he uttered.

"She ez peeculyer in some ways. She likes to be alone en readin' en readin' to beat tha band. She reads high-flown books, an' tha likes. Glad ez not like other

gels. She nivver craves compinny; nivver bin afther kapin' compinny with young fellers. Tha only friends she hez ivver bin crazy 'bout ez books en pets. Say, she hez got a whole circus out 'n tha loft of tha barn, en a hospital en tha basement, whar she keers fer tha sick dogs an' cats. She likes fussin' 'round the sick moighty well, but thar's nothin' doin' en tha sick loine 'mong tha farmer folk en these yer parts. Tha pine woods an' lake breezes seems tuh kape 'em all pertty much alive. My rumatiz gits moighty bad onct en a while, but Glad, she jes fixes the dope an' rubs me shoulders an' arms fer a spell an' I gits first rate agin."

The new boarder was drinking in every word honest old Sullivan said of his adopted niece, when the girl entered the barroom with basket filled, gun ready, and kettle tied beside the lunch.

"Won't you need rubbers over your shoes, Miss Ray? Your feet seem inadequately protected for so long a hike."

"Thet ez 'nother peeculyer t'hing 'bout me gel. She'd spend her last cent fer books ez she did whin she got this week's pay, an' wear her ol' worn out shooze 'stead o' buyin' new ones."

"Dear Uncle, you don't understand how I crave to learn, and how little anyone truly gets of school when forced to stop at the first year of High. Why, about that period you're just beginning to grasp the gift of concentration, and really are learning how to study. That is why I am reading all the time." Glad Ray was almost alarmed at her own confession, and lowered her expressive eyes in confusion.

"Nivver moind, gel. I want you to read all you want 'tuh. By tha way, this young feller aint sech a much o' a paintin' guy afther all; seems he ez goin' to start in ez a lawyer pertty soon; meybe you'll injoy a'talkin' with him a bit whin you walks, en tha likes."

"Are you a lawyer, sir?" Glad was thankful she could speak to someone who could utter a grammatical sentence, and who evidently found food and mental strength in good books.

"I am supposed to be; and I anticipate starting in the practice of law this year after my vacation. Glancing at his watch, he added: "May we start now, Miss Ray?"

"This minute. Goodbye, Uncle. Tell Aunt Susan not to worry. I would have said 'goodbye' to her, but she seems cross this morning, and I think you had better make my excuses."

"Yes, Glad, yer ol' Uncle will fight fer yuh 'til Hell freezes over. Goodbye, gel."

Jack Sullivan kissed the forehead of his "Sunshine gel," and assigned each a bundle to carry.

"Assure Mrs. Sullivan, if you please, that your niece will be properly protected and home before dark. Goodbye."

"Indade, an' don't worry. Ef I din't see tha truth in yer eyes, et isn't me niece thet 'd be with yuh."

John Ronning and Glad Ray then set out to follow a few of the most interesting trails through the pine woods.

A few evenings later, John Ronning wrote this letter home:—

Dearest Folks at Home:

I can see your dear faces, little mother Betty, and big Dad, just as I left you waiving "Goodbye,"—which I knew was intended for "God speed you on to success." Thank you for the wholesome thoughts you have given me! All the Colleges on the globe could never teach the truths you and Dad have instilled into my very soul.

This is a great place; far nicer than the Resort book states. I have an intelligent guide, and everything about here is interesting, and smells fresh and pleasant of young pines. Frank Sullivan, the owner of the Tavern, is an honest but ignorant fellow, with a big heart full of unselfishness and pride for his adopted niece. Sullivan's wife, Susan (I think of her as a half-tamed tigress in clothes) is the worst old nagger I have ever heard of in life or books. However, she is a well-meaning creature, but forgets to draw in her claws.

The niece, whose name is "Glad Ray," is so innocent and beautiful that I can compare her only to a delicate wild-flower,—perfect in Nature's unadorned loveliness, giving forth perpetual radiation and unselfishness, all the time feasting on the wonders she alone observes in the spiritual perfectness all about. You see, I am even versed in her phraseology so early in the game. She belongs to neither church nor cult, but reads, studies, sees, and lives the hours to truly improve her being. She impresses all with whom she comes in contact with her purity and sincerity. I have met many girls, but this one is not a mere girl; she is one of the choice blessings a man encounters but a few times in life. Frankly, I have to confess that in my four years away at school, or under any other conditions, I have never met, nor do I expect to meet any more bewitching and sincerely wholesome girl than Glad Ray. She is the most charming and unassuming creature I can describe. I have never seen anything more than a cheap gingham dress on her beautiful body, yet if Dad were here he would rave over her perfect features from the standpoint of a model.

Glad Ray has lived here in Pike Lake ever since she was a baby. After attending rural school until she was prepared for High, she has spent most of her earnings (a beastly dollar a week as barmaid, slavey, domestic and drudge) for books of a superior order. It would almost seem cruel to take her out of these pine woods and bring her in touch with the cold, calculating world; yet it would be vastly more tragic if the outside world were never to be refreshed by one so natural and beautiful.

Dad, please do not think I am completely bereft of my senses, but to be honest with you, if Glad Ray will honor me and promise to become my wife, I'll give her a chance to go to the same training school for nurses which mother Betty attended, while I am establishing a law practice. Nursing seems to be her ambition; and she would make just such a conscientious attendant as you have often told me mother Betty made when she was young.

Dearest mother Betty, the $1000 you gave me for my graduation gift will just about do what I desire done. Will tell you of my plans later. If I like it in Louisville, am just sentimental enough to wish to remain, mainly because you were born and married Dad there, and all your people lived there. That remains me—so far as Frank Sullivan knows, his niece was also born in Louisville.

Am going to remain here ten days longer—just long enough to get an answer from you, and expect you to tell me the name of your training school for nurses, as I'll have to get Glad Ray located the first day, or that rasping cat of an Aunt will tell the poor girl she is not respectable, as she has already done in my presence.

Now, dear folks, believe me acting with the sincerest respect in the world for all concerned.

With abundant love, I am
Your obedient son, JOHN RONNING.

John had known Glad Ray about one week, but it seemed to both that they had been playmates of years gone by. During their long hikes around the lake and through the woods, they had talked of many things. He could not blot out the vision of her loveliness as they tramped in the depths of the forest and by the sparkling waters. He was in love with this innocent, bewitching girl, and knew the symptoms. Glad loved him, and he was almost positive of that too. He was fairly delirious with the joy love had brought to his life. Neither had mentioned any emotion other than their common love of things beautiful; but, when separated for a few hours, both dreamed again the alluring moments they had spent in each other's company.

CHAPTER XXII

DAYS SPED by on the wings of Love. Something in the consciousness of John Ronning cried out for Glad Ray. He found in her a lovable companion whose unusual knowledge of nature constantly added to his wealth of information. She told him all about the habits of her friends of the forest, explained in minutest detail weird rock formations, helped solve untold mysteries of never ending streamlets, and spiced it all with flashes of philosphy that seemed to draw him closer to God. The nearer John Ronning seemed to approach the Infinite the closer he found himself to Glad Ray.

Glad's love found expression in every conceivable service. She was gay or serious,—always harmonious with her companion's moods. Her's was a nature of naturalness and happiness, forever doing everything to delight Ronning without knowing why. She seemed to be under the direction of a power greater than her own. They had talked of love, of course, but in a rather impersonal way. Glad appreciated fully the difference in their social positions and marveled that this educated and charming man could find so much of interest in her. Like all true love the personal was forgotten in the one grand harmony, both thinking only of the glorious NOW.

Through the woods they roamed, down past the District School where Glad had arrived in state on the back of "Old Sal." On the schoolhouse step they talked of education and what it had done and would do for the country boy and girl. They climbed the split rail fence, and strolled along the highway hand in hand. Under the giant pine by the fishing hole they tarried while John set his line.

"The better I know you Glad, the fewer fish I catch," John confessed.

"The fewer fish you catch, the sweeter will be our friendship," was Glad's reply.

Out of a well-filled luncheon basket Glad would take an old-fashioned blue and white brocaded tablecloth, spread it under the trees on the soft grass, and arrange the banquet. Always there was a different menu until John marveled at the girl's versatility. After luncheon she would gather up the fragments while John related college yarns or they talked of books and other kindred subjects.

The journey back home would lead along different trails but almost always end at a spot near the shallow where the sunfish invaribly bit well. On the shore closest to the shallow was a height of land covered with virgin pine called "Indian Pillow." Here they found a trysting place where they could exchange the numberless conceptions of life so sacred to the memory of lovers.

"Peaceful waters,—down there. The fish are so near the top that we can almost count them," commented John.

"Yes, it is peaceful and shallow, but it wouldn't be good wading there, because the bottom is rocky and covered with a slimy moss which is dangerous footing," Glad explained.

"Guess you know about all there is concerning this country, don't you little girl?"

"The legends are numerous and delightful, yet many of the Duluth city folk have never heard about them. 'Indian Pillow,' this small plateu on which we are resting, is one. It seems that an Indian maiden named Wahnee, meaning 'hunt alone,' named this spot the Indian name for 'pillow.' She was disappointed in choice of a lover whom her father had picked out for her. She came here, cut an artery in her wrist, and rested her head on the little mound over there, quietly suffering and bleeding to death. Along came the white trappers and translated the name to 'Indian Pillow'."

"Well,—romance is everywhere," acknowledged Ronning. "I guess the most honest to his convictions and the best Christian who ever lived was the American Indian. The white man is responsible for his dishonesty, I think. That the American Indian was so basely crucified is sufficient proof."

"The best Christian who ever lived is the one who could do and see all the good the Indian did and saw, and all the good any people can do or see, and live the Laws of God unselfishly. I know only ONE, and,—yes, they crucified Him too," Glad sighed.

"You are right. These are rather modern times to think of living on the Indian's principles, but they had

an unwritten code to which they adhered with astonishing firmness, and it might not be so bad for many of our present generation to learn about the Indian ideals, his sense of honor and family traditions."

"As I have seen it, the young folk of today have altogether too little respect for their elders. They think the older men are fogies and older women quite ready for the crematory," analyzed Glad Ray.

"It all depends on the comradeship existing between parents and children, also the tolerance and faith of both toward each other."

"You had intelligent foster-parents. I had honest ones who were loyal to me. For this I am truly grateful."

John Ronning became silent and serious. He had not stopped to count his vacation days, and suddenly realized that his time in the woods would end on the following day. He frowned.

"What is it all about now, Mr. Ronning?" Glad inquired. "Where is your usual smile? Scowls like that are not becoming to you."

The broad smile once more spread slowly over Ronning's manly face. He could not remain serious long in the sunshine of his companion's coaxing charms.

"Tomorrow, I must go, Glad."

Without knowing why, Glad experienced a sense of suffocation and her eyes welled with tears.

"No, no, not tomorrow," she pleaded. Why, tomorrow is my 18th birthday."

"Well,—of course, that is different," John responded. "I could remain another day or two."

Glad was frankly pleased, and planned the little birthday luncheon she would serve him and the new trail she would lead him to where there was a turn in the forest called "Howl-of-the-Wolf," named such because whenever the wind was sufficiently high it tore through the woods, at that point, like the howl of wolves and had frequently frightened the superstitious Indians and the original white settlers.

Even the birds seemed to echo the musical trill in Glad Ray's laughter. They chirped and sang in chorus, and seemed to realize that their little wild woods friend was with them again.

"Tomorrow I am going to make you a birthday offering," John insisted. "You know, Glad, something more than ordinary friendship has come into our lives."

For an instant fear took possession of her trusting heart, then a sense of abiding faith that she had given only honesty and love so nothing but those same gracious attributes could be given her in return. Intuitively this child of the pines knew that John Ronning loved her, but she had held him at a respectful distance because of the difference in their social positions. He was a Harvard man with a career before him. She had once been introduced by Mrs. Anstrum, of Duluth, as a "nobody." Ronning's parents and her's might have been social equals, but he had been more fortunate in having been adopted and educated by cultured people, while she had only the knowledge that Jack and Susan Sullivan were honest and uncultured.

"My stay here at the tavern, Glad, has been of short duration, but in that time I have learned to love you. Yes, love you deeply and honestly."

He pressed the hand at her side but did not attempt to embrace her.

"You are so splendid, John; and I appreciate such a wholesome love as you give to me. Please let us talk more about it all tomorrow. I'm—afraid it's late—you know, and Aunt Susan will be angry with me."

"Just as you say, Glad. Then tomorrow we will celebrate your birthday with our last luncheon together and unburden our hearts of all this glorious romance,—at least I hope you will, for that is my intention. 'Old Indian Pillow' will learn another secret tomorrow. Shall we be going?"

About a half hour later the happy pair raced into the kitchen where Aunt Susan was peeling the potatoes,—Glad's usual task. Before Susan had time to utter a protest on the late homecoming John, football fashion, hit the line from the rear. Grasping the heavy wooden chair on which Susan Sullivan was seated, he swung it high in the air to the utter consternation of the occupant. Potatoes rolled in every direction as the pan crashed on the floor. Speechless with anger Susan was depositied safe and sound on the floor again still seated in her chair. As Ronning had anticipated, her disgust had been diverted from Glad Ray to him. He laughed so loud and long that the set jawed old woman gave up with a sputter and when his big strong arms seized her in a loving embrace there were tears in her eyes.

"Why, Aunt Susan, I would not harm a hair of your head. I thought you needed a little shock to keep you from being too angry because we were late. Anger, you know, hurts you. People who never get mad live to a ripe old age while the spit-fires die young."

Ronning laughed as he led her to a big easy rocker on the outside porch and commanded her to sit there while he and Glad finished the work. This marked the capitulation of Aunt Susan. When Uncle Jack came home he found her red eyed but smiling, and as his rough hand touched her shoulder she petted it just as she did in the old days when both were young. It's strange how a little Love makes the whole world kin.

Late that evening Jack Sullivan reminded Susan that the next day was Glad's 18th birthday. He talked so seriously that Aunt Susan became quite concerned. Glad had gone to her attic room; Ronning was preparing for bed; and old Jack was saying the hour had come when he must speak to his adopted neice. John Ronning was going to propose, he was quite sure, and before Glad gave her answer she must know the story of her birth. Susan didn't quite understand, but told him to have his "say and have it over quick." He thought she was right and stumbled up to Glad's room.

"Glad, I've seed you an Ronnin air in love and ye must know about yerself. Thet air iron trunk contained one letter thet you haint ever seed. I hed to keep the truth from yez to meeself until ye wuz eighteen. I'd ruther be shot now thin let yez read a

letter thet ud make the tears come, but I reckon now ez the toime. I certainly do love you, an wish I cud do differunt."

Glad momentarily frightened by this disclosure, rallied quickly. In a moment she was all smiles, exclaiming:

"Why, Uncle Jack, I'm ashamed of you for thinking anything you could do for my welfare was not for the best. What do I care about any extra letter that was in the trunk. Suppose my mother was evil, or my father was a thief or hanged,—what difference does it make, after all? I am my own self, and you, my guardian, know all about me, and took me when I was a ragged baby and needed a home and protection. I guess I am good enough to live, and I just want to continue to be a good girl so that you will never want to send me away. There, Uncle Jack, don't you bother about me another minute."

"But, Glad, I jist slipped the letter back into the trunk today, 'Cuz I seed what was happenin' between you and Mr. Ronnin,' and you must certainly read thet air letter tonight. Will—will you?" stammered the old man.

"You're such a good old uncle," and she put her arms about his massive shoulders as she had always done as a child and humbly kissed the two deep furrows between his eyes.

"I'm so happy tonight, Uncle Jack, I'll promise to read the letter before I sleep. You go downstairs, dear old soul, and I will open the little iron trunk again and read the letter which you have replaced

today. Thank you, Uncle Jack, for always sparing me. You have been so thoughtful," comforted Glad with tears in her voice.

Glad always won her point, and before Uncle Jack had kissed her good-night he was a much happier man than when he entered the attic room of his niece. The weight of years seemed to have been lifted. He left his ward to once more rummage through the trunk and read the faded letter which he had returned to its sacred hiding place.

As her uncle's footsteps died away, Glad once more contemplated the treasure chest. At last she was to know the secret of her birth. Dear old Uncle Jack! How true—how kind—how unselfish he had always been. She recalled the many kindly deeds he had done for her, and resolved never to leave him until he no longer needed her services. For the moment she had almost forgotten John Ronning, the man who had that very afternoon told her of his love. Her throat became parched and her cheeks whitened. All the peace and joy of the world seemed transformed into a miserable dread and horror. For a moment she covered her burning eyes with her cold hands, rocking back and forth like one in desperation. Fear for the first time, had conquored the child of the forest. Little by little her poise mastered the situation, and she smiled at the needlessness of worry. Tears came as a relief. She slipped down from her rickety rocker on her bended knees where she leaned over the open trunk. A prayer escaped her lips as she lovingly laid aside some of her own baby clothes, then carefully

lifted a bit of lace, fondled it tenderly, and later removed the pieces of silver, one at a time,—running the entire gamut of human emotions. At the bottom were the paintings—the work of her mother's own hand. What strange fate did art play in her commonplace life, she wondered. Deeper and deeper she delved into her treasure chest where every article proved a mingled source of pride and pain. She realized her mother must have been a woman of unusual attainments. That was a satisfying thought. With all the precious gifts scattered about her, Glad Ray decided it was not such a bad eighteenth birthday after all. Vainly trying to fathom the reason for her mother's forethought in packing a chest of this kind, she finally, tremblingly, touched the faded envelope with its dim inscription. Stiffened from her cramped position, she crawled back to the rocker. In the dim candlelight she could just about decipher the delicate handwriting. At last, after all these years of waiting, she was to know something concerning her own mother. Through the tenseness of the silence, and with a deeper love and emotion than she ever experienced before, Glad Ray at last read her mother's letter:

To Glad Ray, my precious, little, Love-Baby:—

Mother is going on her wedding trip, but expects to return in about ten days. Then you may come back to your own mother's yearning arms, and with Mrs. Allen, we four will live together always. Your own papa does not appear to truly care for you,—you pink bundle of love, so mother will not darken your life by dwelling on what might have been. You will have a manly step-father when mother comes home, as pray God she may!

I am writing this to fasten a written word of love, on the

top tray in case anything should happen to me, that you may know how I loved and supported you, my precious baby, until the end.

In this trunk are a few paintings which I failed to sell, also some family silver. Both are yours, dear; and take good care of them for your mother's sake. The silver once belonged to your maternal grandmother, a venerable woman.

I will not write anything here about your birth, or my own proud family, because I expect to return soon; but should the unforeseen event take place, be convinced that I adore you more than life itself. Oh, my baby! My golden-haired baby girl! I wonder whether you will ever realize the depths of my love.

You were born in the month of March, and at this date you are three years and two months old. For two years of this time I waited for your own father to show some genuine love for either of us. Possibly I am too young and unlearned to understand the type of love he gives us. Perhaps I do not understand life, or his ideal of it. Today he offered to marry me after I had secretly married the good man with whom I am now going on my wedding journey. He made this offer after he knew I was aware of his selfishness and had felt the lash of his sarcastic tongue. So now, my baby, mother is taking the last desperate step to make a home for your sweet sake. I will be a true and loyal wife to this man if he will only be loving and just to you.

Kissing you a thousand times, I am

Your weary, but hopeful
MOTHER.

Like an innocent child beaten for something it did not do, Glad Ray sat wide eyed, staring into space. She could feel the sting of the lash. Torn by conflicting emotions, the innocent love-child received the cruel, full blow of the sin of her parents. Eighteen years had elapsed, but the hurt was bitterly fresh to this wild woods flower. Condemning first one, then the other, she suddenly verged to the other extreme, cursing the man-made law which forced her to be an outcast the rest of her life, and unjustly snatching her

from the arms of the man she loved. Gradually she applied some of the good philosophies she had read, to her own case, and thoughts of her mother and father commenced to assume more considerate and tender proportions. A waive of what she considered 'justification sw'ept over her. Why not give herself, her *all* to John Ronning? Would she not be willing to become his slave and serve his every whim through all eternity? Then without realizing from whence it came, an overwhelming Truth finally asserted itself, and Glad Ray conceived the real message that this very letter had saved her from, which had caused her mother, father and herself their years of suffering. Deeply thankful to God for this timely warning, she leaned back in her chair at peace with the world, convinced that she knew between God and her there was Unity and Oneness, WITHOUT ONE VESTIGE OF ILLEGITIMATIMACY... She now had the courage to spare the man she loved any humiliation of a possible union with her, whom society chose to call a bastard.

Forgetting self, she reached her hands in supplication, crying aloud:

"OH, MOTHER! MY OWN, POOR LITTLE MOTHER!"

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE Pike Lake Tavern household was astir at dawn. John Ronning was the first out in the open. He had passed a restless night. He was in love with Glad and had determined to ask her to become his wife. The question of her parentage had not disturbed him, but all through the night she seemed to be in danger. Usually a sound sleeper, Ronning could not understand why a strange foreboding of evil could make him toss nervously. His anxiety centered about Glad Ray, and when the first bird began to chirp outside his window, he leaped out of bed, dressed hurriedly and was pacing up and down the front veranda half an hour before Uncle Jack arrived on the scene.

While John was wondering how he could convince Glad she should leave the Tavern and spend the time while he was establishing himself in a law practice in preparing herself as a nurse, Jack Sullivan approached, bade him a cheerful good morning and took him by the arm for an early morning constitutional.

"Mr. Ronnin', I want to schpeak to you ez man to man," he began. "I'm ign'rant ez the divil ez to books, but wize ez a owl ez to tha ways o'men. No hard feelin's?"

"None whatever. Say what you wish while you have a good opportunity."

"Thanks. I've seed you growin' moighty attintive-loike to me sweet gel, Glad. Schure now, ez your not afther breakin her heart, air you?"

"Mr. Sullivan," and Ronning clasped the hardened hand of the older man, "I love Glad Ray."

"Yis? En your intinshuns?"

"Are the most honorable, I assure you."

They had reached the split-log fence close to the barn, and as they paused John Ronning continued:

"She is very easily frightened at the slightest advance. However, I feel she is trusting me more and more each day. I have chosen today to ask her hand in marriage. If this step is a mistake on the part of either of us, then good judgment and I will forever be strangers."

"En you love 'er?" asked old Sullivan, earnestly.

"With all my heart," was the positive reply.

"Thet ez whut worried me heaps, ez I c'd see thet Glad wuz a lovin' you ez sure ez she was bornd. She ez too honest to know how ez to kape thim things a secret. She ez too proud o' her love to lie about it."

"I wish your consent to tell her how I feel toward her, and to ask her to become my wife. That is the object of my request for a walk today."

Tears filled the rough old man's eyes.

"Bioy, I couldn't give her freely to innybuddy. She ez tha sunshine o' me life. But, ez I wuz a sayin', I kin see thet she loves you,—so if she'll take you, thin it's her own happiness I've allus fought fer. The good

Lord nivver give me no other childern, but Glad Ray hez bin a 'hole orfint's home o' sunbeams tuh me." The woodsman looked wistfully toward the glowing eastern sky. Both men remained silent drinking in the beauty of the glorious sunrise.

"The perfect begining of a new day," mused John.

Sullivan asked the younger man to wait where he was for a minute while he turned back to the house. Glad Ray was in the kitchen with her Aunt Susan, and the foster Uncle had little difficulty in going softly to Glad's room where he found the faded letter. Once more he had determined to spare his "wild flower" a confession to the man she loved. Before Ronning realized that his companion had gone old Sullivan was by his side again.

"My bioy, before ye schpeak to Glad, read this," he handed over the faded missive.

Ronning scanned the contents quickly, and then met squarely the saddened eyes of the woodsman.

"Ye don't care?" the old man questioned. "My bioy, I knowed ye wuz a man thru en thru."

They shook hands and there was a suggestion of tears in the eyes of both as together they walked toward the Tavern.

"I dint want Glad to hev to tell ye. Bless ye, bioy."

Slightly pale though radiant in a new beauty born of a determination to refuse her lover if her birth would be a sorrow to him, Glad greeted both men happily, and they in turn extended birthday greetings. Despite the tenseness of the situation everything passed along pleasantly during breakfast. Aunt Susan, too,

was unusually gentle and relieved Glad of the many morning tasks so her niece and Ronning might have an early start on their last hike through the pine woods. This was Susan's birthday gift to Glad, and the latter threw her arms about the old woman saying:

"Thank you, Aunt Susan, you don't know how happy I am that you want me to take this farewell walk with Mr. Ronning."

"Well, put on ye're pertty pink dress, and ye will lokk loik a angel, I jist bet." There was a suspicion of tears in her eyes as she tried to respond to the girl's impulsive advances.

Glad also kissed her faithful Uncle Jack on the two deep furrows between his eyes and thanked him for his unselfish, loving greeting. It never occurred to this child of the forest, that birthday gifts were frequently material ones. Consideration and Love were the greatest gifts of all to Glad Ray.

After breakfast John and Glad took the three mile, short route to "Indian Pillow," deciding to return to the Tavern by way of "Howl-of-the-wolf" about sunset. They were weary when they reached the "Pillow," and eager to spread the cotton brocaded table cloth on the soft grass and serve the feast of fried chicken, salad, sandwiches, chocolate cake and strawberry soda.

From one topic to another, the conversation gradually drifted to Glad Ray's future.

"Would you care to go to Louisville and train to be a nurse, no matter whether you found it necessary to use it as a means of livelihood, or not, in future years?"

"Yes, yes indeed! I have always longed to nurse the sick." Her enthusiasm suddenly changed and the color faded from her cheeks. "But I only make a dollar a week, so I haven't either the clothes or railroad fare."

"Dear, innocent Glad! Your Uncle has warned you against strangers, so I am wondering how much faith you could have in me."

"Yes, he has forbidden me to associate with every man I have met at the Tavern except you. Some way, even critical Aunt Susan says you appear quite 'self-respectin'." They both laughed.

"If I told you that in all my experience with society girls, college girls and girls of many classes, never one —no, not a single one—has taken such a grip on my whole being as you have, would you believe me?"

Slowly Glad raised her fringe lashes, and with her large velvety brown eyes gazed into the very depths of his soul. A tender but serious smile lingered about the corners of her full lips. She quite forgot her resolution to give up her lover.

"I knew that, John, before you said it. It is good to hear it, just the same. What else have you to say about your feelings toward me?" The embarassment of other days had vanished. Freely and simply she questioned his attitude.

"You wish to hear the truth, darling, and I am anxious to reveal it," he began.

"I know what you are going to say from the innate visitation of your soul unto mine; but I need to hear the mortal you explain it all. There is no music sweet-

er, and no words dearer than those you are going to say to me."

"Glad! My darling! How different from other women you are! How wonderfully different! I love you! Yes, darling, vastly more than that, I worship you and want you for my wife!" He took both of her hands within his. "Oh, Glad Ray, if words could tell it all,—but they fail me. I love you! I love you!" For a moment there was silence, then the man kissed the girl's finger tips as he resumed: "Was that what you expected to hear, dear?"

"Yes, John. Something indescribably wonderful within my soul seemed to transmit that truth to me many times in the quiet of the night. I knew you loved me above all women. I fully understood your attitude because it is the reflection of my own. It is *Truth.*"

"Do you love me and trust me? Do you want to be my wife? Tell me, Glad."

"I can't tell you until you answer a question of mine. Do recall, John, in my dear mother's letter to me, which Uncle Jack said he let you read this morning, that she acknowledged I AM ONLY AN ILLEGITIMATE CHILD?"

"Yes, Glad, I remember reading that part. It is the *law of man* which brands you as an illegitimate offspring. According to your own ideas, and our mutual acceptance of Divine Right, there is no illegitimacy in reality. There is but the ONENESS WITH GOD. You were begotten in the manifestation and Creative Genius of His Wisdom. The mortal or material bodies of your parents count only as clay or illusive

instruments. God, or the Divine Creator, is *ALL.* Dear little Lamb, at the moment of your mother's sacred conception for you, I believe the love between your mother and father was filled with the Understanding of Divine Unfoldment and the Oneness of Being. At least, you were begotten in the Wisdom, Magnitude and Understanding of the *Creator's Judgment.* Besides, we have quite satisfied ourselves that mere flesh, as we materially see it, is *MATTER.* And flesh or matter in itself, being devoid of power, is NOT *INTELLIGENCE.* Therefore, mere *flesh* or *matter* CANNOT *CREATE* ANYTHING. Flowers, trees, birds, fishes, like *ourselves,* are likewise matter, and *cannot CREATE their kind.* Humans, birds, animals and fishes may CONSTRUCT, but none may CREATE EVEN SO MUCH AS AN ATOM. *Intonation,* as we hear it with our material senses, is *not* the *Creator* of *sound* or *melody.* Finally, MAN IS NOT THE CREATOR OF MAN. Just as Jesus multiplied the loaves and fishes, so *He* (*known as God, Principle, Creative Intelligence, Divine Mind* or any other *respectful cognomen*) has multiplied the beings of the earth, and THROUGH and OF the same *Wise and Divine Source. So you,* dearest Love, *are your Heavenly Father's child;*—HIS LEGITIMATE and PERFECT IDEA. You have unconsciously been His little messenger; and no doubt it was the intention of God that we should first experience, then learn, then realize this peaceful, restful satisfying truth, and when mutually helpful, to be brought into social contact and, lastly, united always. Mysterious as your coming may appear to you, you

have a superior mission in life just as I,—as every man and woman has a mission. In the perfect fullness of time you will carry out the *Will of God as was His Desire at the very beginning.*"

"Then I am not a disgrace being born out of wedlock?"

"You are an example of the mystery of Divine Will,—God's creative and Perfect Conception, with a golden opportunity to convince the narrow element, and hypocritical society, that though *you* are NOT ACCOUNTABLE for your COMING, you ARE ACCOUNTABLE for the manner of YOUR LIVING; and that while *you* are living and serving the God-Good-In-Everything, *they* are wasting priceless energy in criticism and catering to material, empty illusiveness and snobbish hypocrisy."

"Oh, John, it is glorious to know you feel that way."

"I would be a pin-headed worm of the dust were I imbued with the temerity sufficient to condemn the *Wisdom and Intelligence of the Creator.* Should I ever swerve from the courage of my convictions, your smiling face, love, truth and happiness will adjust matters materially."

"Will you assist me like that too?"

"You and I are one. We have the same joys, same hopes, same faith, same tastes and the same willingness to endure and progress through the labors of love. We know mortally that *neither one* is BEYOND *improvement;* but we also realize that from the beginning as well as throughout Eternity we are SPIRITUALLY Created in HIS IMAGE, and of course we know that *God is Perfect.* I can demand nothing,—absolutely

nothing of your mortal self that I cannot and do not freely bestow unto you. Without this sublime understanding we could never be happy. Do *you grasp* the *difference between the material* and *spiritual explanations?*

"Indeed, I do. Life would be so harmonious were everyone to believe that way. But surely you do not think it was right for my mother and father to live together in the flesh, before at least a civil service was performed."

"Toward generalities it appears to be a crime. Toward man-made laws and social customs *it IS criminal* and *material disobedience* and also was a *material crime* with your parents. *Man-made laws* and *social restrictions are absolutely necessary for* THIS AGE and generation, and possibly another, before *Spiritual Intelligence forces* the *masses,* through *self-respect,* education and innate culture, into doing the *honorable, correct* and *unselfish* thing at the psychological moment of test, NOT because it is the civil and material law but BECAUSE IT IS THE HONORABLE AND RIGHT THING TO DO. CONTROL and UNSELFISHNESS are *OF* Divine Spirit, and it should be joy to manifest these noble attributes. As to the REASON, or CAUSE or RESULT of your parent's impulses that is another matter, and has nothing to do with us or the present in any way. We do not know; we dare not judge; we can and must leave the problems of OTHERS *to Divine Wisdom.* Not daring to cast stones at society because I am a material member of this mortal clan,—I would certainly never offer

advice on the intricate problems and mysteries or purposes of the Creative Genius or God. Whether you were born in or out of wedlock, does *not* change the fact that only our *Lord, God, CREATED THE MANNER OF BEING,* which makes it a manifestation of *His Wisdom. Anything* that is *of God,* and born through the mystery and Intelligence of God, *CANNOT* be born in crime or error; and being born through the *Will of God* is being born in *His Spiritual Image.*"

"Then I am born by the Will of God?" asked Glad, eager for every particle of Spiritual information.

"Yes, and born in His Likeness and Image too. You are God's Creation,—His Perfect Idea. The IMMORTAL YOU is of God, just as all Creation is a manifestation of His Wisdom,—of His Superb Intelligence, therefore OF GOD."

"Perhaps you should have been a minister, John."

"No, Lamb; had I chosen the ministry I would have been bound down by more man-made creeds. There are neither creeds nor cults in Universal Intelligence. Universal Intelligence is without limitation. Fixed creeds and unelastic, unprogressive church doctrines are of limited, man-conceived ideals, and are frequently selfish motives for personal gain."

"Where did you learn all these things?"

"By the time a man reaches the age of thirty he has generally chosen his calling in life; has studied not only his preferred vocation, but many of the masters leading to broader and greater advancement. He has at least started to unblind his eyes to the tremendous

and scientific question of LIVING. During recent years, at Harvard and since, I have reached out for all the knowledge I could grasp. Every hour hereafter I wish to add not only to my education and ideals, but I desire to assist those with whom I come in contact, to see the *Truth* in and through the Oneness with God, the ONE AND *ONLY CREATOR*. With you by my side I want to realize the ideal, and idealize the real."

"This is like a gift from God to hear from your lips the perfect Truths just as I also believe them."

"Your belief is what first caused me to see in you the mate I have dreamed some day would be mine."

"But, John, I am so unlearned concerning subjects of the day."

"You are not unlearned when it comes to being a loyal, truthful woman. You are free from affectation, superstition, tradition and deceit. That has made you more beautiful to me than all the physical charms and college degrees could possibly have done."

"You are about twelve years older than I am, and have such splendid education, yet you love me,—a girl of the pine woods, whose surroundings have been so commonplace all her life? Are you positive you love me above all women, John?"

"May I seal my adoration for the most wonderful and beautiful woman I have ever known?"

Without hesitation the unkissed lips of the woman were offered to the man. The kiss was long and perfect in its divine passion; and though the touch was exquisitely gentle and tender, the depth of that kiss

was an exalting penetration unto the innermost recesses of their beings.

"I knew my first kiss would be like that," she cried joyfully. "All our kisses will be perfect and filled with the gift of understanding."

"How did you know you would kiss that way, when you have never kissed any man, excepting your Uncle Jack?" John Ronning held his prize close to him.

"Now I suppose you will laugh at me,—but here it goes: I just pictured it all out in secret from the hour my mind was made up about loving you. I just had to kiss you; and could taste your kisses; and had to have you for mine all the years to come." Glad Ray laughed merrily as she ceased her honest confession. "If I had hesitated an instant I would have been ashamed to tell you all that. But, anyway, to whisper the sweet secrets of my soul to you, John, will make the hour seem all the more perfect."

"So you wanted to kiss me, you precious Lamb?"

"So dreadfully, that I thought you took an awfully long time about it now."

They both laughed heartily and repeated the caress. After the feast of love, Glad Ray again resumed her confession:

"I just kept telling myself to be patient, as all the love I felt for you couldn't help but rebound and give from you to me the demonstration I craved. I knew there would have to be a banquet of kisses for me some day. John, dear, I even tried to imagine the delicious taste of your lips, and the glory of my soul as I experienced the mingling of your love with mine.

Oh, those dreams did not hurt me; they encouraged me to live as perfectly as possible just for you."

"My own! My wonderful Glad Ray! How is it that a beast such as I am, can be blessed with a love and life like yours? You innocent Lamb! You innocent Lamb!". He closed his eyes in sincere intensity as he rested Glad's cheek against his, and drew her closer to him. "There are no words to express my joy, and none sufficiently clear to make the depth of my love plain to you. I ADORE YOU! I ADORE YOU! You beautiful Glad Ray!"

"When did you begin to love me?" she questioned guilelessly.

"From the instant I raised my eyes and met yours, the morning you offered me the additional egg; while you arranged the cherry blossoms; and when I listened to your sweet voice I realized the love dart had permanently penetrated my heart."

"If you love me so much how can you leave me? You said you were going South next Monday."

"The sooner I go, darling, the sooner I can make a cozy home for you."

"If I were studying nursing, wouldn't it be just glorious for both of us? We would never grow lonesome, as I surely will, all alone up here in the woods." She traced the outline of the figure on his necktie with her forefinger.

"How would you like to be married before I leave, and go with me?" He drew the tantalizing slender finger from under his chin to his lips, where he pretended to bite it, then kiss it by turns.

"Really, do you wish to be married before you leave, and to take me with you?"

"Do I? With all my heart! Will you, dear?"

"Will I? Glorious!" Glad Ray clapped her hands with unconcealed happiness.

"You will not live with me though, nor tell others of our marriage, but attend school and study, while I work hard to establish a law practice, and build a home for you to be completed by the time you have finished your course. Can you do all that, Lamb,—silently?"

"I can do anything, John, that is for our future good."

"This has been one memorable day. We have exchanged views on most every topic. We started out in doubt and our future is all planned now. My watch says fifteen minutes before three, so I think we had better begin the return journey back to the Tavern by way of 'Howl-of-the-wolf' before the sun gets lower, then Uncle Jack can call up the minister in Dultuh. He can bring out the license, and everything can be properly arranged by tomorrow."

A look of disappointment passed over Glad Ray's beautiful features. Her eyes filled with tears.

"What is it, darling? Are you not pleased to go with me?"

"Indeed, yes,—but poor Uncle Jack! How he will miss me!"

"I know,—but at some future time he would have to give you up to me anyway, so it had better be when he has fewer hours to dwell on his loss. Don't cry, darling. Let me kiss those soft, red lips back to their

natural shape. There,—that is just like my brave, little Lamb."

"John, dear, I love you more than I can explain."

"About half as much as I love you," and he kissed away a stray tear. "Shall we start now, Glad, and share our joy with him?"

"Yes; it is all so wonderful."

"Oh, Lamb! My own Glad Ray! This is Heaven!"

Hand in hand they strolled over to "Howl-of-the-wolf," then back to the Tavern where they found Jack Sullivan meekly filling the kitchen woodbox, and Suson fussing over the uncooked "taters."

"Bin a fishin' all this time, eh?" was Susan's greeting.

"Yes," answered John Ronning. "We were fishing for happiness, and caught it!"

"Humph! I kinder 'spected tha likes o' thet." Turning to her patient partner, she added: "Hurry, you ol' poke. Tha taters need ter fry, en tha kittle haint a'biled yit."

CHAPTER XXIV

WHILE the preparations for supper were going merrily on, a letter was handed John Ronning, which added greatly to his happiness, and which he passed on to Jack Sullivan to read:

"Brush Ranch,
Colorado.

"My Boy—Our Boy:—

Your dear, frank letter came to gladden our hearts yesterday. There was a chance for us to be depressed because our splendid, big boy had found another love in life. But we don't intend to let that change our hearts a bit, only to make additional room for the 'wildwood flower' just as we took in our John years ago.

Marry her, dear, before you go South, if you intend to take her with you at all. Not but what our boy and girl would live a life of honor, but give no one a chance to say Glad Ray is other than the perfect blossom you have found her. Protect her, dear, as you would your life, and give her our name and blessing.

Should you need more funds than those we gave you, you may borrow from Daddy the required amount. We feel you will start in with consistent economy, and trust you implicitly.

On the enclosed card is the name of the Training School for urses, also two former Directors' names. They were intimate friends of my father, and I knew them quite well.

Under separate cover I am sending you the dear old wedding ring to use in making Glad Ray your wife. Mother Ronning wore this ring first, then your Daddy slipped it on my finger, and now you may have it, afterward to pass along the golden heirloom to your oldest child.

Goodbye, our boy. God bless you both! With fondest love and best wishes, I am always

Your own loyal
"Mother Betty."

P. S. Your Daddy extends his congratulations, and repeats financial offer."

"Looks like ye got a cleen aleeby, John," smiled the old man. "Haint got no hitch nowhars."

The meal that followed was the happiest one served in Pike Lake Tavern for many years. After the excitement had subsided and the news had been breezed about that there was going to be a wedding on the morrow, the announcement kept Uncle Jack busy in the bar room, and gave Glad and John an opportunity to stroll in the moonlight and whisper sweet confidences.

Early the following morning the Tavern was a scene of unusual activity. Throughout the day there were hugh branches of pines, maples and oaks mingled with clusters of fragrant wild flowers arranged in an artistic manner on tables and shelves. The old homestead assumed an air of celebration befitting the occasion.

About noon Glad vanished to her little attic bedroom to dress for the greatest event of her life. Susan, too, had put on, over her black alpaca dress, a special white apron trimmed in handmade lace. Jack had brushed his old suit, slipped off his heavy work shoes, and suffered his feet to be encased in his Sunday best.

About two o'clock in the afternoon old Sullivan, in his sonorous voice, was heard to exclaim:

"Tha minister ez a'waitin' en tha dinin' room. Whar ez tha 'bride'?"

"She ez buttonin tha shooze you giv' 'er fer a widdin' prizzint." Aunt Susan's voice was decidedly more gentle than usual.

"Oh, Lamb, are you almost ready?" called John Ronning, proud of the love term he originated for Glad Ray.

"Almost ready," came the sweet voice. "I am taking a final peek at my mother's letter.

After a few moments the bride appeared in the dinning room doorway.

"Aren't my shoes pretty, John?" Glad Ray danced around in her new dark blue serge dress which Aunt Susan had sent to Duluth for, and exhibited her slender feet in the neatest shoes she had possessed in years.

"Yes, Lamb, your shoes are lovely and sensible. What is the matter with Mr. Sullivan?"

The old man was bending over a window flowerbox, puffing violently on his strong pipe, while tears were falling like rain upon the geraniums from which he was pretending to pick dried leaves.

"Uncle, Uncle, please don't feel so badly; I will come home every summer to see you."

All three made a pretense at smiling.

Aunt Susan was talking to the minister, and dusting around at the same time.

"Ppeers tuh me, Susan, you moight put yer dust rag away fer a while—leastwayz while tha weddin' goes

on." A cloud of grey tobacco smoke escaped old Sullivan's lips.

"Mind yer knitten'. Shtop yer shmokin,' Put tha bird en tha bar, else it'll sing ez shure ez fate, ef tha gal es en here. Lit's git shatrted fer tha coffee'll be thet cowld we kin't dthrink it; 'sides, I set me heart on fixin' a foine weddin' dinner." Susan motioned every one, including the minister, to the precise spot she thought each should occupy during the ceremony.

"Born ruler, by gol ding!" Frank Sullivan managed to laugh at the dictatorial manner of his wife.

"Nivver you moind, I managed tuh kape you shtraight all thim thar years, so I did." Susan nodded to the minister to begin. "Now, Misther Preacher, you may ez well shtart." Her thin lips resumed their compressed shape as she finished the command.

The beautiful bride laid her hand trustingly in that of the groom. When either of them was asked a question, the other invariably looked into the eyes of the one answering. The marriage service was short but impressive. To the old folks it caused the years gone by to roll before memory's eye, filling Jack Sullivan with forgiveness, and softening Susan's heart.

"Wall, I reckin et's proper, accordin' tuh Glad's new fangled books, tuh kiss tha bride, but I haint a 'goin' tuh do et. I'm a goin' tuh kiss muh ol' man. I haint a kissed him fer nigh goin' on tin year 'n now he desarves et." With that Susan marched over and pecked once or twice at her husband's lips, and patted his broad shoulders as she added: "'taint no use tuh

cry, Jack, 'cause the gel wants tuh git a chance en tha wourld. She ez a good gel, en we must sind 'er orf ez happy ez we kin. I'll miss 'er too, shure 'n I will." The old man took Susan's wrinkled hand and shook it gratefully for an instant, then together they walked over to the newly wedded pair, and each managed to offer a sincere blessing.

As the minister was about to climb into his buggy to drive back to Duluth, John and Glad followed him outside and the groom handed him a crisp new twenty dollar bill. It was more than the pastor was accustomed to receive, and vastly more than he had expected at the Tavern.

"Thank you,—thank you."

"Not at all; am only too glad to give it to you. The little wife is worth millions of those," and John drew his bride to his side. Aunt Susan's voice broke the tranquility of the situation:

"Wall, ef yous two y'ung 'uns ez thinkin' o' shtartin' fer Duluth tuh-night, hustle in yer, en injiy tha weddin' meal!"

"In just a moment, Aunt Susan," replied John, with a roguish twinkle in his eye, as the old woman retreated into the dinning room, shaking her fist at the groom, but with a smile on her lips.

"John, dear, we are now truly married, aren't we?"

"Yes, my precious Lamb, we are. We can now live our lives as we see fit."

"You seem so much older than you are, dear. Your dear 'Mother Betty' must have had a wonderful in-

fluence over you." The beautiful bride looked admiringly at the plain Roman gold wedding ring.

"She was and is a blessed woman, Lamb, Her kind face is somewhat prematurely lined from hours of loneliness and the exertion of caring for Dad's aged mother, who lost her mind about five years before she died. There were no children born to my foster parents, and that is why they took mercy on me as an orphan lad and gave me home, love and education."

"What do you remember of your own mother?"

"Just that I have an undying love for her sweet memory. She was older than Mother Betty, and I was rather young to appreciate her sacrifices. For my foster parents there is a profound reverence and affection which one might feel toward chosen disciples who serve as messengers of salvation and examples of loving-kindness. They broke me of many faults, and instilled into me by untiring patience, the self respect of a man. You will love them, too, I am certain."

"How proud they must be of you, John."

"No more proud than they will be of you, my wonderful Lamb-of-Love."

Shall we go now and partake of Aunt Susan's feast? Glad Ray looked more attractive than ever since she had on becoming shoes and gown.

"Yes, little wife," and together they reentered the dining room where, spread before them was such a repast as Glad Ray never had seen. Susan and Jack were seated at the head and foot of the long table,

with the two sides appropriately decorated for the bride and groom.

"I made iverythink before yer eyes." Susan tilted her head proudly.

"I shure don't 'spec you ter git married agin, so bein' ez you air all we hed, en you hed no mither tuh do et fer you, we sez ez Jack en I brung you up ez best we could, et 'd be a fittin' endin' ef we give you an extree good weddin' meal."

Jack Sullivan rose slowly from his seat, and handing Glad Ray several official looking papers with many seals on them, began to speak:

"Gel, we both hed a diffr'nt way o' showin' our love; but Susan yer, en I' sez thet you air to hev all we got whin we cash in." With these crude remarks from his true heart, the old man resumed his seat, with tear-dimmed eyes.

"Yis," chimed in Susan, "we both hed odd ways o' doin' things, but I knowed we brung you up ter be a good gel, innyway. Yuhr not that koind o' gel tuh want us to doie 'fore our toime. Now I jes reckin John Ronnin, 'll know you hev a home o' yuhr own sich ex et ez. That ez four hundred acres o' high land, en sixty acres o' low, 'roun' tha Lake. Et ez worth 'bout fifteen thousand dollars."

Glad bowed her face in her hands and tears trickled between her fingers as she endeavored to control her emotion.

"Thar, thar, gel, cheer up. This haint no funeral We haint dead ez yit!" Sullivan blew his nose energetically which indicated that tears and a cold had

become too familiar. Finally Glad, after heroic effort at control, spoke up sweetly:

"Uncle Jack and Aunt Susan, I can't thank you enough for all you have done for me. The fact that you took me in, a dirty-faced, motherless baby, when I had no place to go on the face of the earth, was the most sublime act I can conceive. And,—and,—giving me your *home,*—the home you both slaved for,—is too much."

"Tut, tut, gel; we haint gone yit. You won't git this yer house 'til we doie; thin et's yuhrn fer kapes."

"Pray God, you outlive me," came the earnest response.

John Ronning assured the old folks that he would place the deed in a vault for his wife, and thanked them sincerely for protecting the 'wildwood flower' all these years in the pine forests.

"Little wife, the Southland calls us. I can't go alone you know,—simply have to take my Lamb along. Shall we hurry, as it is growing late and nearing train time?"

"Yes, John; and we have many miles to go before we catch the night train out of Duluth; also our baggage to check," she acquiesced.

"Well, then, here's to love and happiness for everyone," and John lifted a glass of cider to his bride.

The bride arose; a beautiful smile mingled with her tears as with faltering voice she responded: "Thank you, John; and may God be with us all, until we four meet again."

"Amen, my 'sunshine gel'," bravely answered the old man.

CHAPTER XXV.

JOHN Ronning decided to settle permanently in Louisville. It was a simple matter for the two strangers in the strange city to maintain their individual identity without the world knowing of their marriage in the north woods. With the one thousand dollars John had received as a graduation present he was able to establish himself in suitable offices and begin making friends. Industrious and frugal, he kept Glad well clothed and kept up a good appearance. At the end of three years Ronning was fairly well established in his practice and his name was familiar to the newspaper reading public. The winning of his third and much talked about case brought an astounding fee and he was appointed immediately afterward as chief counsel for one of the largest merchantile houses in Louisville. The salary was large and the position brought him in contact with leading business men who soon learned to appreciate his frankness and honesty.

After four years Ronning, without consulting Glad Ray, purchased an old fashioned homestead which had been unoccupied for some time and quite dilapidated. The weather-beaten structure was remodeled and with new blinds, fresh paint inside and out, and the services of a landscape gardner, the several acres began to take on the appearance of a well-preserved Southern estate.

The various renters in the past twenty years had been careless, but now the young attorney was creating an ideal home for his beautiful wife. It was not to be seen by her until he could present the deed on the night of her graduation. He had ordered an interior decorator to completely furnish the home which had been called of late years, "The Cedars."

Ronning was pleased with Glad Ray's earnestness in her work, and the reputation she was making in the hospital as one of the most reliable nurses they had ever enrolled. While strolling through the park during one of her two-hour leaves of absence, John told Glad he had a home already for her and they could move into it the night she graduated. The grateful girl was almost hysterical with joy. Uncle Jack and Aunt Susan were coming too for the graduating exercises, and could share the first night in the new home with the young folks.

Glad Ray had been "specialed" as nurse on some very important operative cases, coming through with an enviable record for endurance and sense of responsibility. The head surgeons, Doctors Murry and Hallaway, vied with each other to secure the services of their favorite nurse. She not only won the admiration of these men on account of her unusual beauty, but commanded the respect such superior minds would naturally feel toward a refined and capable woman.

Doctor Hallaway, whose name was known over the entire South as an eminent specialist in diseases of the eye, ear, nose and throat, and whose untiring skill had made the sight and health of many a discouraged man,

woman and child as good as new, took particular interest in the career of Glad Ray. He directed her with the same consideration he showed the most respected of his wealthy patients, and in no way interfered with the mutual significance which first brought them together as surgeon and nurse. He had never suspected her identity.

After the strain had passed under which the Doctor had labored during his efforts to gain en education, and he settled down to his professional work, there came upon him the natural result of his years of unceasing struggle to resist temptation and to live a life of unselfish citizenship. He became wholly absorbed in his profession and the unlimited good he could do. The gentler sex played an insignificant part in his life. Except from the painful memories he secretly harbored over the loss of his child and the beautiful woman on whom he always looked as his wife,—there were no moments given to romance.

Doctor Hallaway found a profound satisfaction in his practice, when husband and wife appealed to him for mental redress or comfort. He quickly perceived the folly of domestic discord. His psychological powers were keenly developed and as judiciously exercised, as was his dexterous skill with the surgeon's knife. Many grown-ups breathe a whole lifetime without having lived one commendable hour; but Raymond Hallaway had breathed, lived, suffered and learned. He had acquired the art of allowing others to live, and of giving as well as receiving. With his endurance, experience and silence, he had given to his personality

that touch of eloquence and wisdom which begets trust and retains friendship. He was known over the greater portion of the South as one of the most conscientious surgeons and ethical men in his chosen profession.

Although living in the same town through all the years Doctor Hallaway knew nothing of the presence of the woman he still loved. Gladys Longworth Breckenridge, of late years in most delicate health, had been confined to her bed much of the time. She had heard, without comment concerning the rise of her one time lover, but had retained Doctor Abner T. Harper, as her personal physician, and recently this capable man had been in almost daily attendance in an effort to build her up previous to an operation.

"For a few weeks, Mrs. Breckenridge, I am going to limit your charity work," Doctor Harper said. "This is not only a vital operation on your eyes but a condition that calls for the complete building up of your system."

"Just as you say, Doctor Harper. I know you will do what is best for me physically and mentally. Oh, Doctor, if I could only see! If I could only see!" Gladys moaned, as she resigned herself to the physician's instructions. "Is there any hope that I shall ever see?"

"I don't want to raise your hopes too high, my dear Mrs. Breckenridge, but I'm going to have Doctor Murry of the — Hospital, consult with me tomorrow morning, as he is one of our two most capable special-

ists on the eye. In my judgment, there is reason, at least, to look with favor on the operation."

Gladys smiled sadly.

"Will it hurt much?" she asked humanly.

"You will be under an anæsthetic, Mrs. Breckenridge with every service possible."

"Yes, I know," she sighed, "and when the operation is over,—possibly,—possibly I can at least distinguish objects?"

"We will do our best,—our very best for you," the Doctor replied evasively. "Doctor Murry will call with me here tomorrow morning, and I will also bring a competent nurse.

The following morning, Doctors Murry and Harper made a thorough examination of Mrs. Breckenridge's state of health and blindness, after which they adjourned to another room.

"It looks rather dubious to me, Doctor Harper, as to complete restoration of the sight. However, if you will put one of my 'special' nurses on this case, who is accustomed to administer treatments under me and apply dressings of this kind, in place of the general nurse you have brought along this morning, I will perform the operation. Should we fail,—well, we've done our best."

"Suit yourself, Doctor Murry. I wish my patient to have her sight restored if within the realm of possibility. She is a remarkable woman and is doing an immense amount of good. There is a sad story hidden in

her busy life, but so far I've been unable to penetrate the veil of secrecy."

"There may be a sad story, but there is an unusual beauty and intelligence which one does not have to 'penetrate,' " returned Doctor Murry.

"I've always known that, Doctor, and shouldn't wonder if her beauty and intelligence had something in common with her sorrow; but as I said, she has not confided in me."

"No need of it, Doctor. We will get at those eyes when we have her general health toned up,—and all we can do is to hope," said Doctor Murry encouragingly.

"Regarding a surgical nurse,—will you send one over in the morning?" asked the attending physician.

"No," responded the specialist, firmly. "I'll bring one with me, if you'll grant permission."

"Certainly, Doctor Murry,—go right ahead and do what you think is for my patient's good. Is it necessary for me to call, also?" inquired the junior physician.

"Not particularly necessary, but two weeks from today I wish you would come in on the case again, and then I can tell you definitely what hope there is," rejoined Doctor Murry ethically.

"I'll do it with pleasure. A notation in my record book to that effect would not be a bad idea. 'Two weeks from today,' " he repeated, as he reached for his fountain pen.

The next morning found the consulting surgeon, Doctor Murry, and his special nurse at "The Maples."

"Expecting me, Mrs. Breckenridge?"

"Yes, Doctor Murry," and Gladys extended her delicate hand.

"How is the world serving you this beautiful Spring morning?"

"Now that I know the operation is truly going to take place, there has come over me a feeling of confidence," she replied.

"That is just the way to start in with your treatments," Doctor Murry returned, professionally. "I have brought your 'special' nurse with me this morning," he added, "and she will see that all orders are properly carried out."

"Where are you, Nurse?" questioned the blind woman, eager to touch the fingers of the one into whose care she was to be placed. "I thought there was a strange rustle in the room."

"I am right here, Mrs. Breckenridge," came the answer, soft and musical. "Will you shake hands with me, too?"

"Yes, surely I will," and Gladys Longworth Breckenridge permitted her cool fingers to be held between both warm palms of the nurse, who possessed the soothing touch which the patient had so often craved during her present illness. "You speak so sweetly,—as though you could sing. Do you sing, Nurse?"

"No, Mrs. Breckenridge,—unless the song of my soul (which understands the call of the birds better than most people understand the warbling symphonies) is singing."

"Have you been associated much with birds?"

"Yes, indeed," she exclaimed enthusiastically. "I was brought up in the pine forests of the North, where we have many varieties of beautiful song birds, and it has been my privilege to know and imitate each one."

"How delightful you were selected to care for me. I, too, love the birds and flowers better than most people do. Every hour since I became—became—blind, birds and flowers have been my closest friends, unless it was little children I would meet, and whose tender, birdlike, trilly voices I could hear, as my secretary wheeled me about on trips through the parks."

Doctor Murry was pleased at the friendly greetings.

"Now, Miss Ray," he concluded aside, after a short conversation with Mrs. Breckenridge, "I will leave you to follow my instructions minutely. Remember, Miss Weeks is to be permitted no more than one hour in the morning with Mrs. Breckenridge, and then only on condition that the patient's history is reading more favorably each day."

"I will do exactly as you have directed, Doctor Murry." Glad Ray commenced by adjusting the patient's pillows, and making her more comfortable.

"Then, goodbye, until two weeks from yesterday, when the regular physician, Doctor Harper, and I will call again to observe the result of your labors. I shall expect you to report to the hospital should anything unforeseen take place."

Both women listened to the surgeon's retreating footsteps until they heard the lower door close gently behind him.

After more than a week of tender and conscientious

care, Mrs. Breckenridge came to the conclusion that about half of her illness was due to the face that proper nursing had not been given her particular case.

"Please continue reading, my dear. I am profoundly impressed by your sincere and sympathetic tones. But first answer me one question: How long have these beautiful ideas been so much a part of your personality?"

"Well," Nurse Ray responded, "since I finished the Eighth Grade, I have read everything possible although I have had no direct instructions and do not think I am altogether positive on my views of life. This much I do know: Every moment of my existence there has been experienced a pure, subtle, peaceful knowledge of the Oneness with God."

"Irrespective of your calling in life, your views seem quite defined," commented the older woman. "Why did your education cease with the Eighth Grade?"

"Always I have craved more education, but was not able to finish my first year in High. Until this opportunity came for me to attend the Nurse's Training School, I had come to the conclusion my educational advantages were about over. This is my senior year at school,—you know I graduate this coming June."

"Do you lean toward any particular creed?" enquired Mrs. Breckenridge.

"I had never thought of any of my views belonging to any specific school. They came to my consciousness so naturally that a specific creed would have interfered with my progress and broadness of perception. It would have narrowed me down to a one-man idea of

faith. I am trying to get away from man-made dogmas and the bigotry of tradition; trying to appreciate the sublime Oneness of Infinite Personality or the Universal Brotherhood of Man; and to me there can be no particular creed in a constantly progresive and universal religion. My simple belief must be UNDERSTOOD, ATTAINED and EXEMPLIFIED. The golden philosophy of: "Do unto others as you wish others to do unto you," seems to me to be fair and reasonable."

"You know that I am blind don't you?"

"Why certainly; but I also know that there is nothing superior to the Power and Will of God. I know that He is the All-Generous and Divine Sense of Truth, Principle and Love, which enables me to very conscientiously carry out the Doctor's orders, and at the same time look directly through all mortal afflictions and realize the necessity for moral, mental and physical effort,—and the infinite instruction and spiritual *opportunities* to be derived from any task set before us, or which we are forced to bear. I know that SPIRITUALLY we are Created in *His Perfect Image.* I know that every Created condition is based on God's Understanding and His Infinite Wisdom,—and in some *intricate manner* expresses His Love. I know that ALL IS PROGRESS, TRUTH AND LOVE: and that with your SPIRITUAL *sense of sight,* you can *see* and have *perfect understanding,* and that YOUR IMMORTAL, SPIRITUAL *YOU* IS WITHOUT AFFLICTIONS.

"Nurse, you are so comforting,—so very, very com-

forting! Please tell me, did you originate the little book from which you read to me yesterday?" asked Mrs. Breckenridge.

"I did; yet my introduction to these progressive ideas came about from reading the inspirations of great writers who stimulated my understanding until I could no more withhold writing my own thoughts in booklet form, than I could withstand *believing* in them."

"Will you read some more, my dear, I need every word so much,—so much," she repeated. "Do you know I can almost see your face," and the blind woman smiled serenely.

Once more Glad Ray began to read in her low, sweet voice,—a voice, like soothing music, tenderly ascending or descending according to the demands of the soul.

"Even though from mortal sense there is separation in the flesh, there never was and never can be separation in Spirit.

"Spirit, being Divine, and I (Spirit) being born in the Image and Spiritual Likeness of the Divine Creator, and OF HIM, (and knowing the impossibility of the death of the Divine Creator) know also it is impossible for that which is Spiritual to die. Therefore, I believe in Eternal Life because I, Spirit, am of God; and God being Divine Spirit, can never die but IS Eternal Life.

Spirit is revealed in the Eternal, the Immortal and the Divine Manifestations of the ONENESS OF BEING.

"Oneness of Being is the perfectly blended and complete unity of Principal, Mind, Love, Good and Truth.

"There is no fear. There is no doubt. We can neither see nor feel fear or doubt, because they do not possess power, shape or life,—therefore fear positively does NOT exist. Fear is an *excuse* not a *reason*. Fear is a delusion or illusion.

"Fear is a coward's weak substitute for lack of application and interest in the constant advancement we may attain every day. Fear, ignorance, superstition and suspicion are but illusive terms and excuses, *not reasons*.

"Heaven is the *Cause of Right*. Heaven is a wholesome manner of living, good health, physical energy, normal mentality, moral efficiency and Spiritual Unity.

"Hell is not a place but a condition. Hell is regret and tears, a stagnation of energy and material mind where will-power, force, truth, ambition and genuine interest in life have taken a very unnecessary vacation. There never was and never can be any such condition as stagnation in the Active, Living application of DIVINE PRINCIPLE.

"Hell, not being a location, and not possessing power, shape or life, has no part nor place within or about us. Hell is moral stagnation and spinelessness,—a term or condition unworthy consideration. Hell could not possibly *live,* as nothing is *real* or *lives unless* a part of the Creation of God.

"We must *idealize* the REAL in order to realize the IDEAL. Principle, truth, love, unselfishness,

loyalty and justice are perfect ideals; while the combination is the producer of Utopian Reality.

"*God* cannot radiate anything but good, any more than the sun can radiate anything but light. Good, like the sun's rays, may seem to be absent temporarily, but never destroyed. Good can no more be retarded nor prevented from convincing the world of its Unlimitedness and Perfectness, than dark clouds can forever remain before the sun's rays. GOOD IS INFINITE AND ETERNAL. GOOD IS GOD, just as divine LOVE IS GOD.

"The Unity of Purpose exemplified by Truth, Love, Unselfishness, Immortality and the Eternal Oneness of Being is all plainly and perfectly embraced in the Creations of God or Infinite Principle.

"God (Divine Spirit) is the practical, the spiritual, the beautiful, the wholesome, and the perfect in Justice, Good, Truth, Peace, Unselfishness, Consideration, and all the Universal attributes which exemplify the *Oneness of Being*.

"The Life-Beautiful sings constantly in perfect harmony with Divine Spirit, this melody:

Reflect thou ME while life you plod,
For I AM LOVE,—and *LOVE IS GOD.*"

"Dear Nurse," Mrs. Breckenridge reached for the warm hand of the reader, "if those thoughts might be absorbed by every man and woman, how much more glorious this world would be,—and broader too. Pardon me for interrupting,—please read on."

And Glad Ray read:—

Cause and effect are visible everywhere and at every moment. Cause and effect are Natural Laws, and perfect and subtle compensation of the Creator. Cause and effect comprise the wisdom of compensation, and the justice and impartiality of Eternal Progression and *Universal Education.*

"The difference between the saved and the sinner is: The saved has found within himself his own Divine Right of *Self*-CONTROL, and his inherent right to power, *THROUGH GOD,* over all material conditions. The sinner is the materially weak mortal who indifferently wishes to be good but without genuine energy. And instead of discovering HOW to make USE of the unlimited forces within him, is materially dominated and controlled BY them. This unhealthy and unnatural condition of material dominion *is error* which is gradually eradicated and, eventually through the Laws of Compensation directed and dominated by the Wisdom of God.

No one can defy the laws of God and succeed with it, for Compensation is a natural law and *ABSOLUTE.* Always we pay. Always we learn. This is Infinite WISDOM. When we *are* prepared, we receive. What we think we need is one thing; but what we receive IS what we need and is the Law of Compensation and HIS WISDOM.

"Vindictiveness, selfishness, indifference and haughtiness are traits of which every mortal should be ashamed. Forgiveness, humility, justice and love are the spokes in the wheel of harmony, Brotherly Love and Universal Christianity. They enrich life and lead men onward and upward *with* God.

"Laziness, untruthfulness, dishonesty and cowardice like *any* error, can be absolutely and completely conquered through *Control, REAL Effort* and Self-Respect. There is a world of difference between lackadaisical effort and REAL effort.

"God is Living and Everlasting Principle. God is Control. God is Truth. God is Love. God is the Infinite Good in *ALL.*

"Our thoughts are *Living* things and a part of the progressive Creative purpose. AS WE THINK, SO WE LIVE.

"Because we do not possess the same thoughts or views on questions of today as we did yesterday, only proves we are in harmony with the law of Progress. We develop and unfold in thought and purpose every hour of every day when in perfect accord with the principles of Control, Truth, Real Effort and Spiritual Love; this is Universal Growth and the Natural Law of Compensation.

"For what we frequently believe we are unjustly deprived, also exemplifies the Law of Compensation. If we are perfectly prepared for our material needs we receive them; IF THEY WERE FOR US AND WE WERE READY FOR THEM, THEY WOULD BE OURS; this is the Law of Compensation. Principle directs, develops, prepares and bestows according to our needs, *regardless of our material desires.* There is nothing more Magnanimous, nothing more Subtle or Perfect than the Judgment, the ALL-Seeing Wisdom and Justice of the Divine Creator.

"Truth is God, just as everything Good and Manifest of the Divine Oneness of Being, is God. We must *believe* in Truth and *live* in Truth, just as we *believe* in God and *live* in God,—*not* as a limited, *final conception,* but as a limitless, universal, progressive idea of the *Omnipotence and Omniscience* of the Eternal God.

"They who will not progress out of ancient dogmas and man-made creeds into the unlimited fields of Universal Intelligence and Truth, and they who will not see *God in Everything Good,* are temporarily chained by the ignorance and errors of mortal mind and flesh; they are pitiful bigots and slaves of tradition. However, in the unfoldment of *Limitless* Time, the *Divine Promises will be understood and received by ALL;* and in the meanwhile and forever, the Creative Universal Intelligence (Truth, Love and God) will continue as always,— *ETERNAL.*

"Our greatest advancement mentally and morally is attained through the silent, unselfish love we bestow on others, and not so much in the love we receive. Though we may become encouraged and rejoice in receiving, there is no glory so manifest of Divine Wisdom, as the *unselfish* GIVING *of* LOVE.

Without material crucifixions, pain and sorrow, we frequently fail to lean on and perceive the WISDOM and ETERNAL PRESENCE OF GOD. Sometimes we rebel at His Wisdom,—this is useless for, *until we accept* His Knowledge and Leadership, we are slower to progress, slower to

comprehend the MERCY in His subtle methods, and Growth is vastly more difficult. When we abide by *His Word,* then Eternal unfoldment becomes clear and defined, and gradually we understand the SPIRITUAL Perfectness where limitations, distortions or miseries of any kind *cannot* exist."

"You read as one inspired. Where did you go to school?" asked Mrs. Breckenridge.

"Only to a country grade, and a few months in Duluth where I received part of my first year of High School," admitted Glad Ray.

"Why did you not finish High School, my dear?"

"Well,"—hesitated the pretty nurse.

"Didn't your family appreciate what an education would mean to a girl of your striking characteristics?"

"It was too long a trip each day for the old horse, and in cold weather there was no place for him to stand under shelter. The winters up North are terribly severe, you know. My folk were not financially able to keep me in town. I purchased some very fine books to read,—books on birds and flowers as well as works superior to the kind I have been reading to you."

"Your views indicate that you have made a fine choice in literature. What is your favorite?"

"That is difficult to answer offhand. Possibly some of the works treating on the subjects just read. Such books as this teach me I need have no fear of death, which is one of my greatest sources of comfort and encouragement."

"Your views are not those of youth in general."

"Neither were my young years like those of the average girl."

"Possibly being brought up in the forests," suggested the blind patient, "without friends, and meeting no one unless—"

"Unless they were hunters, tourists or fishermen. Books were my companions. Especially have I always been eager for literature expounding theories of the future life," rejoined the nurse with frank sincerity.

"Has the future troubled you at so early an age?" The film covered eyes were turned in Glad Ray's direction.

"Yes, considerably," she sighed.

"You are in good health?"

"Indeed, yes. The motive is wholly selfish, I guess. My mother, who has passed out, suffered much. The realization that she was socially crucified by pious hypocrites because of her immature but honest ideals, has made me yearn to be rid of every particle of vindictiveness.

"Poor—poor woman!" sighed Mrs. Breckenridge. "And, of course you learned to harbor no resentment toward your mother, and to have no fear of death?"

The patient closed her eyelids and pressed her hands over them as though to hide vivid and painful recollections.

"The only comfort I ever had since becoming old enough to realize the loss of mother and father, was that they were living in Truth and Spirit with me, even if I could not visualize them in the material flesh. In

order to believe this I would have to know, without a doubt, that even after mortal flesh had decayed from my mother's unselfish material body, her ETERNAL ONENESS WITH GOD is the Law of Principle which brings her ever close to me. Though she is gone in mortal flesh, yet her IMMORTAL *self lives forever.* I always try to act, think and speak in a manner worthy of the companionship of my mother's beautiful Spirit. I believe that, Spiritually we are made in the Image and Likeness of God; so as God cannot die, and we are taught we are Spiritually created in His Image,— Spiritually *we* cannot die; so, therefore, there is no *real* death, no separation, space or time."

"How old were you when your mother died?"

"I do not know," sighed the nurse. All I am positive of, is that my Aunt Susan and Uncle Jack Sullivan of Pike Lake, Minnesota, brought me up as prudently as they knew how."

Glad Ray closed the manuscript from which she was reading, and took the thin, cool hands of the patient within her own, as the hour was fast approaching for the invalid's afternoon sleep.

"Forgive me, Mrs. Breckenridge; I did not realize for a moment that we were reading too long. Also, anything pertaining to the death of either your relatives or mine, is hardly conducive to the restoration of your good health, according to Doctor Murry's final instructions."

"Doctor Murry does not know the main reason for my physical agony. Blindness is but a mortal condition, and is an insignificant factor, compared with the

mental torture I have suffered for years and years, which no earthly physician can cure. I have *silently* endured this agony. And do you know, Nurse, I have reasoned it all out that it will do me good to unburden my secret and bitter sorrow to you. It is such a wonderful comfort to know that in Spirit there is no death. My baby died in infancy. I cannot tell you all,—not today—but I must tell you soon." The blind woman controlled her emotion with considerable effort.

"God will give you grace to bear your secret burden if you have faith in Him and believe in Immortality and Everlasting Life. All morbid memories will leave you, and you will experience a demonstration of peace through the knowledge of *Truth*. When once you embrace Truth as your Perfect Guide, then you have no further right to cultivate the empty, worthless, powerless, lifeless companions named Morbidity and Doubt. They are mistakes and *nothingness*.

"Yes, my dear Nurse, that is true; I quite forgot."

"If you will pardon me," suggested Glad Ray, "Truth never yet traveled the same road, under any pretext, accompanied by Morbidity and Doubt. Those worthless nonentities have neither power, shape nor form; while *Truth is Everlastingly before us in* EVERYTHING *good.*"

"How comforting your words are to me. I have never been able to get over that terrible blow,—the death of my little daughter. My arms have fairly ached, so pitifully have I yearned to hold her to my heart."

"Please don't let the tears come, Mrs. Breckenridge.

We must have you in perfect condition for the operation,—and you will be, I am certain."

"Yes,—yes, I know, but it will do me no harm to speak of my child,—my wonderful baby."

"In a way it will, Mrs. Breckenridge. You are bowing to harrowing thoughts; you are giving way to deluding memory; when all the while there is *Hope, Happiness* and Infinite *Love all about you.* Infinite Love must be your guide."

"I understand," sighed the patient.

"You cannot ask Infinite Love to walk behind you, and be invited to your side only when you are stumbling. HE must be your Guide constantly, to share in EVERYTHING, and you must make HIM your *ALL.* Without HIM your path will be filled with mocking errors. *WITH HIM ALL IS PEACE AND UNDERSTANDING."*

"That is right," answered the blind woman reminesciently.

"Will you sleep and rest a little now, if I first bathe your forehead and eyes?" asked the nurse a bit anxiously.

"I'll try. Sleep is never so beautiful as when I dream I am holding my golden-haired baby girl.

"There now," softly spoke the nurse, as she finished bathing the feverish eyes of the patient and placed the bowl and towel on a nearby stand, "you will feel more refreshed after this sponging. Allow me to arrange your pillows and I will leave you for an hour's rest."

As Glad Ray smoothed the under sheet and bent over to lower the pile of soft pillows, her gold locket,

which had been concealed next to her bosom, slipped from under the white uniform and fell against the cheek of her patient.

"What's that?" cried Mrs. Breckenridge in alarm.

"Don't be frightened," the nurse answered reassuringly, "that was only my locket. Please excuse my awkwardness."

"Your LOCKET?" She reached frantically for the object in question.

"Yes,—that is the only bit of jewelry my blessed mother had to leave me, and I wear it constantly."

"Your MOTHER?—Locket?—*YOUR* LOCKET?" she demanded almost fiercely.

Nurse Ray, in astonishment, took the wildly groping fingers and calmly directed them to the small token of love against the outside of her uniform.

"Yes,—yes, that is like it!" Clutching at the nurse with one hand, and holding tightly to the locket with the other, the blind woman cried feverishly:

"What is engraved on the outside of it? I can feel the lettering on the surface with my fingers?"

"It reads," Glad Ray endeavored to restrain her agitaton, "'From—"

"Does it read: 'From Mother to Glad Ray'?" interrupted the patient, frenzied with the deliberateness of the nurse who had concealed her own emotion.

"Did you read that with your fingers as the blind read?" A cold perspiration covered Glad Ray's temples and the palms of her hands.

"No! No! I have never learned to read with my fingers. I gave a locket to my child in her infancy.

Until now I believed her to be dead. Tell me,—" Mrs. Breckenridge pursued trembling with emotion, "tell me—please don't keep me in suspense. You see it; does it say: 'From Mother to Glad Ray?' " The frantic woman dropped the locket, and with both hands grasped the shoulders of the nurse.

"Yes,—yes," moaned Glad, as tears welled from her eyes. "I don't understand."

"Is there a picture of a woman—just a face on the right half, inside? Is there a lock of light brown hair in the other?" gasped the excited sufferer.

"Yes, Mrs. Breckenridge, both the picture and the curl are there. Can you—can you be—my—my—"

"My child! My baby! My baby! I am your mother! Your own true mother! DO YOU HEAR ME? I AM YOUR OWN MOTHER!"

"Oh God! Can it be? Can it be possible? How good! Dear God, how good!" Kneeling by the bed, Glad Ray at last buried her tear-stained face against the bosom of her *own mother.*

With their arms about each other, sobs and tears convulsed both women as they bravely tried to repress their emotion under the tremendous strain of this most unexpected revelation.

"Mother! My own, darling *Mother!* sobbed Glad Ray.

"My baby! My baby! You are my baby! Great God how merciful to give me back my baby!"

Love, tears and utmost happiness were so joyously

blended that at that moment more rational explanations of events were beyond human effort.

"Mother, darling, is there the least little doubt in your heart now, that I am your lost child?"

"No, no, my baby! My baby!" And Gladys Longworth Breckenridge again and again covered the tear-stained face of her daughter with kisses, caressing her most tenderly as she sobbingly voiced her gratefulness to God.

"There is not a particle of room for doubt, is there, Mother darling?" Gladys patted the warm cheeks of her little girl grown tall. "But how could you remember, verbatim, what you wrote?"

"When you are a mother, my precious child, you will understand it all."

"That was a foolish question,—but I, too have suffered a thousand heartaches."

"It must have been terrible for you, baby girl. Did you find the silver and the paintings in the trunk?"

"Everything was as you said it would be. Dear old Uncle Jack cried with me when we found so many love tokens, yet not one single page or trinket to tell me of my mother's *name*."

"There were initials on the ancestral silver if I remember correctly."

"Yes, an old English 'L', which only made the mystery deeper."

"That was the first letter of my girlhood name, dear. The name of 'Longworth' is an old and proud one."

"Then virtually my name is 'Longworth'?"

"Legally, dear child, you have no name."

"What was my father's name? Please, please tell me."

"You do not know him, but I have frequently heard of his skill and ability, and possibly you may meet him some day, so I presume it will be best to tell you everything." Gladys Longworth Breckenridge related truthfully to her only daughter the mistakes and sorrows of her young womanhood, and concluded by saying:

"Your father's name is Doctor Raymond Hallaway."

"Doctor Hallaway! The surgeon?" gasped Glad Ray in astonishment. "Is *he* my father?"

"Doctor Hallaway is your father. Have you heard of him?"

"Yes. Naturally I would hear of him in my line of work," she answered, wondering how she could discover her parents' attitude toward each other without betraying the confidence of either.

"He has developed into a gifted and learned man. I did not comprehend how much there was in him, nor the depth of his love until after I married Judge Thomas Breckenridge and too late. It is all over now. I made a pitiful error when I gave him up. Three people could have righted the mistakes of two, and your babyhood would have been so happy. My error was not only intolerance, but youthful indiscretion and impulsiveness. Surely I am to be forgiven for doubting his intentions—I have suffered so from mistaken judgment." Once more the hot tears rolled softly down the pale cheeks. "Blessed baby girl! If I could only see your face!"

"I know you will Mother, darling. I know you will."

"If your features are in harmony with your wonderful voice, then Divine Spirit has been good to you."

"You will feast on many sights of which you have heretofore been deprived. Just to think, I have been caring for *my very own mother* all these days, and never dreamed of such a wonderful privilege!"

Only at intervals could either Mrs. Breckenridge or Glad Ray quell their tears long enough to much more than speak the other's name. Gradually there came the relaxation of appreciated calm; after which both nurse and patient were better able to unfold the mysteries of the years.

"Where is Mrs. Allen, my baby, Glad?" asked the mother unable to realize her child had grown to womanhood.

"She was burned in the Hinckley Forest Fire on her way North to visit Uncle Jack and Aunt Susan. That's the reason I came to be in the pine forests all my life. There was no place else for me to go,—I had no home. No one knew my mother's name. No one else wanted me."

"Terrible! Terrible! Do you recall Mrs. Allen, dear?"

"No, Mrs. Breckenridge,—Mother, darling," corrected Glad Ray, as the tears still persisted in playing a conspicuous part. "Her relatives, by marriage, were very kind and took me in. They have been as good to me as they knew how, and bestowed such advantages as they could afford."

"Did they tell you about me?" Gladys asked jealously.

"Yes, Mother; but they didn't know your name, and all they had to prove I belonged to someone else, was the gold locket."

"And the little iron trunk?" interposed the sick woman, eager to settle the least question of identity.

"Oh yes! I have that here with me at school. I have always hoped to find you ever since I was old enough to realize the pitiful loss of a mother's love. Yet, the little iron trunk has been like an altar to me, before which I often knelt with your sweet face in the locket before me."

"Poor baby! My poor, poor baby. How my heart has bled for you!" Again the loving mother-arms embraced the kneeling figure, and tears mingled with the soft, golden hair of her child. Did you find my letter in the top of your trunk?"

"I have it here in my purse, Mother, always waiting and anxious to prove my relationship." Glad arose and crossed over to the closet assigned to her for outer garments. "Here it is; shall I read what you wrote? Let me draw up this tiny rocker as my knees tremble under me."

"Yes, darling. Mother was selfish in her intense joy. Of course take the little rocker, but draw it close to the edge of my bed, so I may touch you every moment." The proud woman ran her delicate fingers over the outline of the nurse's beautiful face.

"Do you remember how you commenced the letter, Mother?"

Without an instant's hesitation, Gladys Breckenridge began: "'Precious Little Love Baby'."

"That's it exactly." Then Glad Ray read in her expressive way, with voice so sweet and low, almost to the close of the letter when her mother interrupted her, finishing not only the farewell missive to her baby girl, but the postscript as well.

"To think *my own baby* has been caring for me is equally as marvelous, dear child. Had it not been for the little locket slipping out of place, we might have gone on considerably longer before we recognized our relationship."

"Some way, some how, the Truth eventually would have revealed itself. The Manifestation of Truth is Absolute," declared Glad. "You know, we were just speaking about 'compensation'".

"Quite right; how beautifully the laws adjust themselves."

"God's Wisdom and Truth need no material assistance. Truth cannot remain concealed. Mother! My own, darling Mother! I have always declared some time and some how I would feel the tender touch of my own mother's hands."

For a few moments Glad Ray was too overcome to say more, but rested her flushed cheek against her mother's. In this feast, the most sublime of all loves, —love between mother and child—was consummated the priceless virtues of forgiveness and understanding.

"Dear God, how merciful to have my baby home once more!"

"Mother!"

"Glad Ray! My own precious Glad Ray!"

"Mother! My blessed mother!"

CHAPTER XXVI

ON THE following morning Glad Ray began to set in operation a well defined plan she had worked out during the night to bring about a reconciliation between her father and mother.

"Material law declares their pathways continue in opposite directions" mused Glad Ray. "How grateful I am that I know the Oneness of Mind and the Power of Love. Divine Intelligence could not make a mess of two lives. Even an ordinary human can see how happiness can be brought about."

During her hour off duty Glad hurried to the office of Dr. Murray. She was invited into the consultation room where she told the great surgeon the story in detail.

"And I am the long lost daughter of Gladys Longworth Breckenridge," Glad concluded.

"You? Are you positive Miss. Ray?"

"I have all the proofs; but my finding her and she finding me is beyond all human speculation."

"Well! Well! I surely congratulate you, indeed—"

"Now, Doctor, pardon me for seeming bluntness,—but there is no time for mincing words. May I continue?" Glad Ray persisted, almost impatiently.

"I am listening," rejoined the surgeon,—unable as yet to see beyond the girl's personal gain in this unusual discovery.

"Well, here is a very brief history, as mother related it to me, of the illegitimacy of my birth."

"Illegitimacy!"

"I thought that would surprise you a little. According to man-made laws I am,—well, my father (not Judge Breckenridge whom you knew before he died) but my *own* father is living and does not know my mother and I are on earth. Now what I desire you to do, is to bring Doctor Hallaway in on this operative case, but *not* mention his name to Mrs. Breckenridge, until some time following the operation."

"Why Doctor Hallaway, in particular?"

"Because,—*because he is my father.*"

"Great Scott, girl! *Are you aware of what you are saying?*"

"If I were not absolutely *certain*—because of actual proofs in black and white, as well as through the heartbreaking confession of *my mother,* Mrs. Breckenridge—I could never have come to you and asked this favor."

"What do you wish me to do?" asked Doctor Murry, puzzled as to the girl's motives.

"I have learned mother still loves Doctor Hallaway, but deliberately married another for reasons I haven't time to explain. The Doctor has never married, and has always appeared to me to have a 'feminine' reason' for his single life. I wish you to ask him to perform this operation, after we get mother prepared and ready in the operating room, and you suddenly feel too miserable to carry out the ordeal."

"It might unnerve him, were he to ascertain the identity of the patient," deliberated Dr. Murry.

"Not if neither of us pretends to notice his discovery. If he does not find out during the operation, he surely will divine it when he comes to place the bandages over the eyes. If not then, they will recognize each other on removal of the bandages. He will naturally be the first person within range of her vision. Won't you *please* do this for me, Doctor?"

"Miss Ray, I will do anything for you. Don't you wish Doctor Hallaway to know of your relationship before then, either?"

"That would spoil everything. I would be forced to relate that which I desire him to find out for himself. He will ask about me as soon as he recognizes mother, and she is able to be questioned. That is, if he has the real father-love. The instant I knew he was my father, I realized I loved him as such, for he is certainly a wonderful man, worth while and lovable. I can see now why I was so drawn toward him as a child might be, and with the same respect. If he only shows he loves mother, the rest will be simply glorious." Glad Ray was more than enthusiastic with hope for her mother's happiness.

"Well, well, well! This is a revelation and a romance, I declare! In the morning I intend calling at 'The Maples' with Doctor Harper, and together we will announce the day of the operation. Have Mrs. Breckenridge ready for an examination by ten A. M.," he concluded, professionally.

"When the day for the operation actually arrives,

you will then make your excuses to Doctor Harper about being unable to operate, and that you have asked the senior surgeon, Doctor Hallaway, do it for you,—will you, Doctor Murry?" urged Glad Ray.

"Leave that part to me. It is easy to have a sudden attack of rheumatism in my right hand, isn't it?"

They congratulated each other on the brilliant prospects. Then Glad Ray hurried to the law offices of John Ronning, to share the great news with him.

"My darling, why so excited? What is the rush? Why so flushed and so unlike your usual and composed self?" greeted John with genuine surprise.

"You'd be excited, flushed, and anything in the world but composed, if you had just found your mother,—and your father too, though he is not aware of his new dignity."

"Glad,—my Lamb! Your mother and father? HERE? Tell me quickly all about it!"

Glad Ray poured out the good news, and all her hopes and plans.

"If there is anything I can do to aid you, just tell me. Don't forget, little Lamb, I am your husband," he whispered as he took her in his strong arms.

"There *is* something you can do, but you kiss me so much I can't find breath to tell you."

"Fire away, and I'll be good for five minutes. Perhaps you think it's funny to see your wife only one two-hour leave in a week, and sometimes not even that!"

"Well, John, Injun-big-man, that is all I see you,

too, you know. And I miss you, Love, just the same as you miss me."

"Quite true, but you have the nurses and the young physicians to chatter with once in awhile."

"And you have your clients; so my Man, John, is not going to be jealous, is he?"

"No Lamb, there is no room for jealousy"

"How good that sounds! How like the days when we were up in the Pines together. Those were wonderful days, Man."

John laughed at her new name for him; but it indicated the very manner in which he always impressed her,—a brave, REAL *MAN*.

"You haven't told me yet in what manner I can share in these family honors."

"Well, have a minister there in our new home the night of my graduation. During the day tell the County Clerk that by order of your client, you must secure a marriage license for Doctor Raymond Hallaway and Gladys Longworth Breckenridge, and then I'll do the rest right there."

"How about securing two marriage licenses to satisfy your own mother and father as we satisfied Uncle Jack and Aunt Susan, and we can be married all over again. A double wedding of our own manufacture, on the night of your graduation and our housewarming!"

"That would be simply splendid! I am so happy, and I know everything is coming out perfectly. "Man, my mother's eyes will ache just from gazing at her newly acquired relatives, especially when she sees you,

your mother Betty, your father and Uncle Jack, not to mention Aunt Susan." And Glad Ray laughed roguishly at the prospects.

"She wont be able to take her eyes off from you, you little optimist," and John patted the velvet hand, then kissed it gallantly.

"Now. John-Man, I must be going. Mrs. Breckenridge (I mean mother) will be awake before I reach 'The Maples' as it is," she added.

"Call me up, Lamb, every day and let me know how things are progressing."

"I will. Be prompt the night of my graduation."

"Couldn't be other than punctual, wife-o'-my-heart. I have made too many plans and surprises for everybody, for me to forget the hour."

"Goodbye, Man, dear."

"Goodbye, Lamb of Love."

CHAPTER XXVII

"EVERYTHING ready in the operating room, Miss Ray?"

"Everything is ready, Doctor Murry. Will you be up in a few moments?"

"Yes, very shortly."

Glad Ray's heart fairly danced from suppressed excitement while she arranged the patient on the wheeled stretcher and guided it easily into the waiting Hospital elevator. After reaching the operating room there was a moment's delay. Slowly, Doctor Harper commenced to administer the ether.

"You won't give me too much, will you Doctor Harper?"

"No, Mrs. Breckenridge, you need have no fear."

"But you will give me enough that I will feel nothing?"

"Please breathe naturally, and try not to speak," came the kindly reply from the anesthetist.

"Just one request, Doctor. May I please hold Nurse Ray's hand?"

"Mother, darling," whispered Glad Ray close to the ear of the patient, so Doctor Harper could not hear; then more audibly: "please do not speak, but go to sleep confidently." Surprising the physician as well as herself with the courage of her declaration under

the circumstances, the nurse stood erect and continued aloud: "Remember, dear, no matter how mystifying are the mortal afflictions, they are nevertheless *powerless in themselves,* being under absolute control of the Creator who sways the merciful Laws of Divine Compensation through the wisest channels—His Wisdow and Supreme Intelligence."

"That is better," Doctor Harper spoke soothingly, giving an admiring glance in the direction of the nurse, the while noticing the added confidence of the patient as she held the hand of the younger woman. At this point Doctor Murry entered the operating room with the senior surgeon, Doctor Hallaway.

"No objection, have you, Doctor Harper, if I ask our senior surgeon to do this operation today? My hand seems uncertain this morning,—possibly slightly crippled with muscular rheumatism. The financial arrangements will remain just the same."

By this time Mrs. Breckenridge was completely under the influence of the ether.

"Not at all. Not at all," repeated Doctor Harper. "I am glad to see you again, Doctor Hallaway. Haven't met you as frequently as Doctor Murray, but have always heard good things about you and your successful operations. I am rather pleased, so long as it is necessary, that you will substitute for Doctor Murry on this particular case. Mighty fine woman."

"Who is she, Doctor Harper?" inquired the senior surgeon as he held up his hands for the sterilized rubber gloves to be adjusted.

"Wife of the late Judge Breckenridge an enthusiastic worker in charities."

"I have read of her, and of several splendid deeds. Sad affliction to be visited on so useful a member of society," exclaimed Hallaway sympathetically. "Cataaracts are both uncertain and merciless."

The soft sweet voice of the nurse responded trustingly and bravely, much to the astonishment of the three professional and decidedly material men:

"Cataracts can hardly be merciless when they do not possess the power to think."

"No, cataracts are devoid of actual mind, that is quite true; but I intended to convey the idea that they are merciless in effect," corrected Doctor Hallaway, rather admiring the courage of Miss Ray to speak under conditions where a nurse is supposed to be only a very necessary and silent servant.

"Please forgive me, if I seemed rude. Indeed, it was my sincere convictions which prompted me to speak."

"There is nothing to forgive. We all have the right to voice our ideas—especially when the voicing is done as politely as you did yours. Besides, it is a pleasure to be taught by your methods; and it is a fool who cannot learn a little something from everyone. I like what you said. What gave you that conception?"

The senior surgeon motioned to the interne to relieve the anesthetist, Doctor Harper, so the latter could step to the side of the patient where there was a better view of the operation.

"Nothing has power," Glad continued, *"which does*

not manifest itself thru God. And cataracts are NOT Spiritual Manifestations; but like all material afflictions, they force us to recognize the Supreme Power of His Wisdom." Glad Ray drew herself to full height, and never appeared more beautiful yet humble in her earnest declaration than while she continued: "God is Infinite Mercy and Love. What He does may appear cruel and unnecessary, but ALWAYS *it is Wisdom* —intricate *Wisdom* and part of the *tremendous system of growth.* Afflictions and deformities of our material senses and bodies *are not there* SPIRITUALLY and are probably added to our common dust-to-dust bodies to act as object lessons or teachers. Possibly a better illustration might be to say that our misfortunes and afflictions are tests of *FAITH* in the *Wisdom of* God. This lovely woman might have had even more pitiful suffering and deprivation thru which to perceive the Power of God's Hand or Direction, had this cataract not *COMPENSATED.* Yes, Doctor Hallaway, I believe that God's Mysteries are blessings in disguise, and are deep, intricate and many. Yet, God is *ALL MERCY* and *LOVE.* Sooner or later we discover that no mortal affliction, *in itself, has power,* but is visited on us with startling *justness, though incomprehensible to us.* How marvelous is *SUPREME INTELLIGENCE!* How marvelous are the *LAWS OF COMPENSATION!* How intricate subtle and just are HIS WAYS! I might even add: We often learn the unselfish art of *GIVING* when we are *STARVING!* Also, we are frequently *MOST CHARITABLE* when *MUCH IS TAKEN FROM US!*"

"How true! Great God, how true is that last remark. We ARE most charitable when much is taken from us." In spite of himself, Doctor Hallaway showed indications of being greatly impressed. A significant glance unnoticed by the others, was exchanged between Glad Ray and Doctor Murry.

"It is evident now why Miss Ray has been our most conscientious nurse." Doctor Murry moved to one side as another nurse rolled the instrument table to the left of the operating surgeon. "What do you think of local conditions, Doctor Hallaway?" Everything was in shape to use the knife.

"I'll be able to tell you better in a moment." He slowly drew the white sterilized gauze from the patient's eyes. The wax-like features, closed lids and discolored lips revealed nothing more to the attending surgeons than any preliminary examination for a major operation might have done. Cautiously Doctor Hallaway folded back one eye-lid, inserted the eye speculum and ordered her cap fastened more securely to protect his operative labors from the unruly curls about her forehead. "It is just possible to save the sight, but do not build up hope."

There was a dead silence as the surgeon began using the instruments. Everyone looked on in admiration as he proceeded to guide the knife first upon the right eye, then the left, in a manner which proved his skil, over the afflicted parts, and left no doubt in the minds of those present concerning his ability. In less than thirty minutes the operation was completed on both eyes.

"Mrs. Breckenridge will either be totally blind or her sight restored within ten days," commented the senior surgeon in his characteristically calm way. She is to be kept in a darkened room, with the same style of bandage used today, and this solution administered by the aid of a medicine dropper every three hours for two days. After that, the solution may be diluted by adding ten drops of sterlized water to the collyrim every day until the tenth day. Under no circumstances must the eyes be exposed to the minutest ray of light. Miss Ray, I understand, is 'special' nurse on this case. Am I right?"

"Yes, Doctor Hallaway," the sweet voice responded timidly.

"*That is splendid.* Now I am certain all will go well. At least there will be no speticemia, and the dressings will be properly attended to. Tomorrow I will drop in to see the patient."

With his last remark, Doctor Hallaway walked leisurely out of the operation room and down the corridor toward the stairway, closely followed by Doctor Murry. Glad Ray once more wheeled her mother into the elevator assisted by Dr. Harper.

"We might as well get in and ride down, also, suggested the junior surgeon, Dr. Murry.

"Very well," and Hallaway moved to the left to make room for the wheeled stretcher. "I generally walk down for the exercise, but as the cage is here we may as well ride."

The face of Mrs. Breckenridge was wholly exposed but for the bandages about her eyes and forehead.

The tapering fingers were folded gracefully across her breast against the soft lace of the delicate silk lounging robe which had been hidden during the operation by the regulation linen covering. On her slender feet were appropriate silk ribbon slippers of immaculate white. There was about her an atmosphere of gentleness and culture. Glad Ray modestly stood back in the rear of the elevator but her eager eyes were taking in every glance of Doctor Hallaway's. The three men, quite unconscious of any one else in the lift, stood in respectful admiration, gazing upon the beautiful woman before them, still insensible to her surroundings.

As if an apparition had suddenly appeared, Doctor Hallaway became ashen white and his brown eyes —like two round pieces of highly glazed china— were bulging from their sockets. He lowered his face closer to the patient's. He touched her cold hand and held it as he spoke, further betraying his unexpected agitation.

"Are you sure this woman's name is 'Breckenridge?' "

The two surgeons and Glad Ray looked at Doctor Harper for the answer. He had been the blind woman's personal physician.

"I am positive, Doctor Hallaway. I have known Mrs. Breckenridge since she came back to Louisville a widowed bride," answered Doctor Harper, the Breckenridge family physician.

Again Glad Ray and Doctor Murry exchanged glances.

"Have you any idea what her name was before becoming the wife of the Judge?"

"No, I have not. She has always been somewhat of a sphinx."

Slowly Gladys Longworth Breckenridge raised her right hand and laid it over that of Doctor Hallaway, who held her left within both of his. Though she was still under the influence of the anæsthetic, conversation and touching her body had disturbed her stupor.

"She is coming out of the ether. Get her comfortable as soon as possible," Hallaway ordered, regaining his composure. "I will be up to see her in a few moments."

The elevator stopped at the second floor. To the right a short distance down the hall was the finest suite in the Hospital, selected by Miss Weeks for Mrs. Breckenridge. The interne wheeled the stretcher, followed by Doctor Harper and Glad Ray. The senior and junior surgeons, Doctors Hallaway and Murry, went on down to the first floor. In an hour Doctor Harper found Doctor Murry in the children's surgical ward, where he informed him that Mrs. Breckenridge had recovered complete consciousness and was resting easily. This news was later transmitted by Doctor Murry to Raymond Hallaway, who had spent the intervening time pacing slowly up and down the first floor corridor.

"Will you assume charge of Mrs. Breckenridge, as you performed the operation, Doctor Hallaway?" inquired Doctor Murry.

"I'll be pleased to." A peculiar smile illumined his

serious face. "What's the matter with Harper,—cold feet?"

"Oh, no; he is mighty busy with his private practice, and asked that you—being here every day—assume responsibility and let him know when the patient is ready to go home."

"Suits me nicely. I'll call him over the 'phone when her time is up here," and Raymond Hallaway smiled at his good fortune.

Within another hour Doctor Hallaway had dropped into see his case. "Are you in much pain, Mrs. Breckenridge?" His deep voice vibrated with suppressed emotion.

"No, Doctor Murry,—I am doing nicely, thank you."

The surgeon raised his finger and nodded to Glad Ray in such a manner she knew he did not wish the patient informed of her error in identity.

"I will come in to see you every day, and even more frequently, if you don't mind."

"How strange your voice sounds, Doctor Murray, but it's an improvement I assure you," and the patient smiled the same wonderful smile which had haunted Raymond Hallaway throughout the dreary years.

"I'll try and keep my voice just like this if you truly like it better."

"I do. It sounds so good and—comforting."

The surgeon stood gazing upon the love of yesterday while the muscles of his face visibly struggled with combined joy and regret.

"Child, is he gone? What a blessed voice! It

brings back the dear, dead days,—days that are gone,—gone forever."

Tears filled the eyes of Doctor Hallaway; and when he realized Nurse Ray might detect his emotion, he abruptly left the room.

"Yes, mother, darling, he is gone."

"Do you know whose voice Doctor Murry's resembles?"

"Whose, dear?"

"Your father's—Doctor Raymond Hallaway's. I could never forget so long *as there's breath in my body!*"

"Will you rest now, mother, dearest?"

"Pray, baby girl, that I will be able to see you once more."

"Yes, mother, you will; I know you will. God is All-Merciful."

Nurse Ray sat quietly beside her patient until the latter had fallen sleep. Glad Ray wondered if it were possible that Doctor Hallaway had noticed how much her brown eyes were like his own. The resemblance to both parents was indeed most striking, and even Doctor Murry conceded the relationship after the day of the operation.

CHAPTER XXVIII

ELABORATE preparations had been in progress for the commencement exercises of the Training School for Nurses in connection with the ——Hospital. John Ronning received word from his adopted parents they would accept his invitation. A room at "The Cedars" was made in perfect readiness for their comfort, as were suites for the Foster Aunt and Uncle of Glad Ray, and Doctor Hallaway and Mrs. Breckenridge,—who would arrive blissfully unaware they were to be among the special house-guests.

For several days two good servants, Albert and Chlotilda, had been installed at "The Cedars." John also moved over to the new home that he might accustom himself to the details of its management. A minister had been engaged and everything arranged with the exception of the licenses. The one for Doctor Hallaway and Mrs. Breckenridge could not be obtained until the latter recognized her former lover, and then only at the last minute after all had agreed to the plan.

Three days before graduation was the date set for the removal of the bandages from the eyes of Mrs. Breckenridge. There was intense excitement under a well-schooled calm. Doctor Murry had his secret reason for being particularly anxious, which he shared

with no one but Glady Ray, who, in turn, could hardly restrain her joy. Doctor Abner Harper was interested professionaly, as any physician would be in a major case which had caused as much comment and public notice. Doctor Hallaway was certain if he stood before his patient as the bandages were removed, a yearning cloistered sacredly within his breast all these years would be transmitted to the heart of his lost love. Even if sight were denied Gladys, the Doctor longed for the legal right to be eyes for her. He dared hope for the absolute success of the operation, yet well knew the possibilities of failure.

It was with apparent calmness Doctor Hallaway entered the special room prepared for the test. There stood Gladys Longworth Breckenridge with outstretched hands greeting the physicians as they presented themselves. Early that morning Miss Weeks had delivered to the Hospital one of the patient's most becoming silk afternoon gowns. Glad Ray dressed the blonde hair with its touches of silver, in soft waves, away from her face and like a crown on the top of her head. There was nothing to indicate the invalid, as all physical ailments had vanished shortly after the reunion of mother and daughter. The only visible signs of distress were bandages over the eyes, and a sadness about her mouth. The shades were drawn and soft artificial lights used. Although it was noon, the room appeared as twilight.

Doctors Harper and Murray, an assistant nurse and an interne stood at the rear of the seat occupied by the patient, at the request of the senior surgeon. Slowly

and tenderly Glad Ray began removing the bandages. Once or twice her fingers trembled, but as she reached the last squares of gauze resting against the closed lids of both eyes, there came over her a perfect relaxation, —an exalted sense of finishing a labor well done.

Doctor Hallaway's deep, soothing voice broke the tense silence:

"Mrs. Breckenridge, even after every layer of gauze has been removed, please do not under any circumstances open your eyes until the nurse instructs you to do so."

"I will do just as you say, Doctor Murry," she half whispered, the corners of her lips twitching with nervousness.

Doctor Hallaway raised a warning finger, and there was perfect quiet. He then moved about ten feet to the front, facing his patient, and standing as one transfixed with great beads of perspiration falling from his temples, his lips slightly parted and hands clinched. He nodded to Nurse Ray to continue.

"Under no circumstances, Mrs. Breckenridge, open your eyes until told to do so," came the repeated warning, this time from Glad Ray, "After I count five, then you are to open them very slowly, looking directly in front of you, and as level with the eyes as possible."

Doctor Hallaway's gaze never left his patient for an instant, and his body appeared rigid.

"One,—two,—three,—four,—five,—" for the fraction of a minute Gladys hesitated.

There was perceptible anxiety shared by all present

when the patient's eyelids began to quiver, as she resolutely made up her mind to face any eventuality with womanly fortitude. A moment longer and the trembling lids barely separated. At last, wide apart, there opened before Raymond Hallaway the deep, blue eyes of the woman he loved above all else in life. Years of trials and mental torture passed like ethereal vapor into nothingness. Here before him was the living answer to the crowning hope of the Doctor's existence.

For several seconds, which seemed even longer to those interested, Mrs. Breckenridge stared into space with only darkness before her. Her expression varied from dread to intense suspense, followed by a half-hearted hope which gradually became a beautiful reality. Tremblingly she rose and, with arms extended, oblivious to the presence of more than one physician, cried aloud her supreme happiness:

"I SEE! I SEE! RAYMOND! RAYMOND! I SEE!"

"GLADYS! MY OWN! MY LOVE! COME!"

In an instant Raymond Hallaway, the lover, had clasped his sweetheart within his yearning arms. There were tears in every eye as the great secret unfolded, and love met its own. Those privileged to witness the sublime meeting silently left the room. Alone at last, the surgeon and his once blind patient were seeing to the fullest, and believing in the IMMORTALITY OF LOVE and the Perfect Wisdom of the Creator.

* * * * * * *

"My night of nights has come at last," declared

Glad Ray as she stood surrounded by her numerous relatives including Uncle Frank, Aunt Susan, Carston Ronning, Betty Walker Ronning, Doctor Hallaway, her mother and John Ronning in the large Hospital parlor, just a few minutes after the graduation exercises.

"My darling, I am proud of you, your reputation as a nurse, and your perseverance in accomplishing that which you undertook without liberal preparation. I was twice proud as I feasted my eyes on you—the most beautiful woman in the world to me—standing there among your fellow nurses receiving your deserved diploma," and 'Injun-John' tenderly placed his arm about the 'Lamb' as he continued: "I'll wager there was not another nurse among the lot who worked for her sheepskin with the same unselfish reasons in mind that you did."

"MAN, how I love you because you say the encouraging things a woman longs to hear. Don't let the others catch your words, for they might think you were dreadfully conceited about me,—just a quaint, funny, blondy nurse." Glad Ray pulled the sleeve of her husband's coat playfully. "Thank you, dearest, just the same. I owe my success to you, John,—the one who gave me my opportunity. *Without my MAN,* —well you know about the orphan days, Mrs. Anstrum and Pike Lake." She laughed merrily as she pretended to shiver.

"A girl like you, Lamb, would have been a pronounced success anyway." He pressed her hand. "You darling Lamb!"

"Oh, adorable MAN! My generous MAN!"

"I didn't do the graduating; it was *you,* Lamb."

"No, you didn't graduate in fact, but you made not only my graduation possible, but all the other things about to happen."

"I have some great surprises after we reach home,—one or two even *you* don't know about," and John Ronning chuckled softly over his secrets.

"To think I am going HOME! To *OUR* Home, John! *Your's* and *mine!*" Glad Ray exclaimed eagerly.

"Yes, OUR HOME at last. Just wait until you see all the things I have been performing, and the loveliness of OUR HOME.

"Have you?—you know." Glad Ray nodded smilingly in the direction of her parents.

"Have I! Did you think I would forget after seeing the new solitaire glistening on your mother's finger today, and Doctor Hallaway and she not being able to be separated for five minutes? They are surely making up for lost years."

"Isn't it about time we started the remainder of our program? I can hardly wait to see inside of my new home, and most of all to have the rest of the evening completed."

John Ronning then explained to his enlarged family that his gift to his wife, was a residence all her own; and if they would enter the waiting carriages, they too, could enjoy the graduation meal family style, in the new home called "The Cedars," which even Glad Ray had never entered.

Gladys Longworth Breckenridge naturally rode by the side of Doctor Hallaway who made no pretense of keeping his hands from holding those of his promised bride. With them rode Aunt Susan and Uncle Jack Sullivan in fine new bib and tucker for their "gel's graduatin'." Sullivan poured out his pride over his adopted niece's success, and Susan boasted of the pure and wholesome manner in which they "hed brung up our gel." There was no jealousy in the happy hearts of Glad Ray's parents,—instead, they opened their generous arms, and very humbly and appreciatively took the benevolent old couple in as part of the new family, each member of which was necessary to Glad Ray's "night of nights."

Carston Ronning's face was a picture of satisfaction. He experienced a sense of secret romance which rather bowed to his masculine vanity in seeing his adopted son married to the beautiful daughter of his first love.

Betty, white-haired, a bit rounder, and as charming as ever, was all aglow with mother-pride in her boy's success, and held a loving welcome for his "wildwoods flower,"—"the Lamb,"—Glad Ray.

The two carriages drove under the tall arch of stone and iron,—the entrance gate to "The Cedars."

Albert and Chlotilda held wide open the main doors and assisted the party of eight to the reception hall.

"Gladys, my darling, does anything about this place look familiar to you?" Doctor Hallaway's remarks drew the attention of the other guests.

"Raymond! How glorious! This was my girlhood home!" exclaimed Gladys.

"Mother, dearest, did I understand you correctly? Did you live here when you were a girl?" beamed Glad Ray.

"Of course she did, little wife,'" broke in John. "Isn't it a glorious coincidence that I selected this particular spot, as the entire place will have a more sacred significance for all of us, and especially the beautiful mother who can now see her own Glad Ray, thank God."

"John, my boy, how proud I am of your thoughtfulness?" championed Mother Betty, when she noticed Gladys and Glad Ray were too overcome to reply.

"Well I don't deserve a bit of credit. I owe everything I have so far achieved or hope to be, to the manly example of my Dad, and the pure influence of Mother Betty,"

The guests either laughed affectedly, or coughed betrayingly in order to hold back the tears as John lifted his Mother Betty off her tiny feet in a boyish desire to impress her with his lasting appreciation.

"Dinnah is ready to be served, sah," and Albert bowed before his young master.

"All right, Albert. You and Chlotilda come into the library with the family. There is a surprise or two more for everyone, which will take about ten additional minutes, but which must be carried out before our guests sit down to eat."

As the entire party entered the library, a pleasant-faced man in clerical garb arose and was introduced as Reverend Robert Forbes, of the church in which the late Reverend Walker was once pastor. John Ronning

then made a few witty remarks about soul-loves, affinities and ghosts—might suffice for some services, but as he understood jurisprudence there was a civil law which had to be respected as a necessary recognition to the dignity of our country. Hence, he had taken it upon himself to obey the commands of a very beautiful spirit, by the name of Glad Ray, to procure two marriage licenses, and one certificate of adoption. The first marriage license was issued in the name of Doctor Raymond Hallaway and Gladys L. Breckenridge. The second (which was unnecessary but repeated in order that the bride might have her dear mother and father witness the ceremony) was to unite John Ronning and Glad Ray Hallaway. The second ceremony, he went on to say, could not legally take place until after the first, and also after certain adoption papers had been legally signed and sworn to, thus giving the "very beautiful spirit" her rightful name. Everyone was astounded at the temerity of the young lawyer, yet secretly delighted, and did not wonder at his great success in the legal world.

"Albert, will you please ask the three gentlemen now in my private study to come in also?"

"Yes, sah! Yes, sah! To the elder bride's astonishment, white-haired Judge Dibbell and two other officials of the court entered the library under Albert's proud leadership.

"Now, Reverend Forbes, if you will tie the first knot, we can then go on with the adoption," explained the attorney, John Ronning.

The attention of the minister, and all the guests, was

rivited on Doctor Hallaway's beaming countenance as he bent over the chair of his promised bride.

"Gladys, dear, that means us." He spoke without hesitation, and impressively. "Are you willing and ready to become my own legal wife tonight as you have always been in my heart? Don't you think we had better have the ceremony performed right now, beloved?"

"How can I, right now?" she timidly whispered.

"Better now than tomorrow," he pleaded with love indicated in every syllable. "Please dearest."

"But Raymond—"

"Will you, Gladys?" He reached for the delicate white hand on which glistened the engagement ring he had placed there only the day before.

"Yes, Raymond," came the sweet response, as she laid her hand in his. "I can see now,—*I CAN SEE!*"

There were many tears shed during the short service as the elder groom and bride became man and wife, but they were tears of joy.

"Now, friends, here is a little girl who, for many years, has yearned for her own parents. Particularly has she desired to be adopted by her own father. Is he willing?"

John Ronning's voice was indeed appealing as he secretly recalled the dreary life of his "Lamb,"—Glad Ray—of the Northern Pine Forests.

"Willing! My precious Glad Ray!" Something caught in Doctor Hallaway's throat as he struggled to regain his composure. "There is no greater happiness next to making your mother my wife, than having you

legally my child. Come to me, Glad, for I am your own father." Tears, the Doctor did not try to restrain, ran down his well-lined face. "From the time I first observed results of your professional duties, I considered you the most conscientious of nurses. Since your identity has been made known to me, I can comprehend the natural kindred affection and the reason for my decision. It is because you are of your mother, God bless her!" This last was uttered with added reverence. "My daughter, only God knows what suffering this separation has caused my lonely soul to endure. *Glad Ray, I love you.*"

"Gosh, ding, but this ez loike playin' dance musick et a fun'rel, haint et, Susan?" The guests laughed heartily at Jack Sullivan's remarks. Even Glad, who had rushed into her father's arms, smiled through her tears.

"Yep, et ez, Jack. Happiness ez havin' a dance, en mem'ry ez payin' tha fiddler" and Susan's pointed chin tilted a bit higher than usual.

"Nothing loike fixin things onc en fer all. Our gel is some hum dinger fer fixin' things; en by tha way, John ez not so blasted fer behind tha gel that a'ways, ither. Huh, Susan?"

"Trust tha orfints. Yuh know, I was a orfint mysilf." Susan clasped her hardened palms together, and snapped her thin jaws in her declaration.

Most of the company had considered the Sullivans a pair of amusing necessities until Glad Ray, true to her protectors, gave everyone to understand that Uncle Jack and Aunt Susan had given her what the entire

world had denied her,—the shelter of a respectable home and honest advice. The kindness of the Sullivans was worth more to the appreciative heart of Glad Ray than fortunes, and the memory an everlasting example of merciful and genuine charity.

While the adoption papers were being signed, the little group watched the manner of taking the oath and verbal answers with no small amount of interest. Deep in their hearts John and Glad understood that it did not take paper and signatures to make her any more the daughter of her father, than it did the flesh and blood of her mother. They knew too, as did Raymond and Gladys, that in God's Perfect Wisdom there could *not* be illegitimacy; that illegitimacy is a *man-made law* and *social deformity; one* of the *taints* of *snobbery;* and a local situation which in *no way effects the Wisdom of the kind, just, loving and Gentle Jesus.* Also that paper and signatures could neither *add to nor take from* the absolute completeness of *God's Perfect Creation.* In addition, however, all four believed that the truest evidence of reverence for God's Laws is first evinced through having respect for the Common Laws of State.

"Father, now I am legally your's and mother's. This is the most wonderful day of my life! Glad Ray drew the doctor's face to hers and softly kissing his forehead, remarked in her loving, innocent way: "Try not to let another tear escape, for this is the day of rejoicing. A GREATER SURGEON, father, HAS MADE US ALL TO SEE, and GIVEN US HIS BLESSING.

"My child! My precious baby girl!" wept the

mother, as she, too, crept into the embrace of her husband's arms, where her daughter already nestled.

"Gladys, my wife! And, indeed, my Glad Ray!" Doctor Hallaway beamed with glorified affection upon his two loved ones. His joy was beyond words.

"This young lady," interposed Reverend Forbes, was married four years ago at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Jack Sullivan under the name they truly believed was all she possessed,—'Glad Ray.' Tonight she has received the name which is legally hers, and the marriage service is about to be repeated.

"Wall, wall, this ez sure good fer her maw's sore eyes tuh see Glad git married agin. Haint et, Susan?"

"Yep. Happy you come?" Susan then addressed the others. "I hed an orful toime tuh git 'im to lave his poipe tuh home. But I sez, sez I, thet we wouldn't go a step 'til he done jes ez I tol' him. His pipe ez thar, en we air here."

No one doubted Susan's word, nor the necessity for her husband's meek expression, as she gave her chin an extra tilt and clamped her jaw with unusual force. "En I don't quite git Glad Ray's high talk 'bout 'Prin'-ple'en 'Inf'nite Love'; but whut iver et ez, it wurked out tuh perfecshun."

"But we have an entire smoking outfit just for Uncle Jack, and a special room in which to smoke, while he visits us," interrupted John Ronning, as he winked roguishly and tilted his chin in imitation of Susan. Everyone joined in the laughter, and Susan not the least of the number.

"Wall, wall, thet ez jes loike you, John." The old

man clasped his host by the hand. "Yuh dint fergit tha days o' sweet cider, eh?"

"I shall never forget those days in the Pines of your Northern Woods where I first received your hospitality and saw my Lamb, nor exactly how she looked that memorable morning."

Fearful lest John relate the story of her humble dress and shabby shoes, Glad Ray crept close to his side.

"Please, MAN, I am ready," and Glad Ray Hallaway stood quiet long enough for Chlotilda to adjust the tulle veil and orange blossoms which thoughtful John Ronning had purchased for one of his surprises. After she was "decorated," as Susan put it, John presented his bride with a beautiful bouquet.

"Have you ever told your mother how you sacrificed your desire for pretty clothes and shoes, and put your meagre savings into books, instead?" and the happy groom turned the bride about several times for the general admiration and inspection of the family.

"No, John, but she is likely to find it all out if you keep on. Do you know that Reverend Forbes is waiting?"

"Yes, Glad Ray,—and I am vastly more anxious than the minister, but my desire has been to have your parents know what a brave, true girl you always have been; that you have proven a lovable, gentle Lamb, and *a real* GLAD RAY *to us all!*"

The big 'MAN' was both truthful and generous in saying the things which make life worth while to a loyal woman. It is such a wonderful comfort to a

good wife to know and hear from her chosen mate that he always sees, loves and understands; most of all that he finds time to tell her about it.

John Ronning led his bride over near the fireplace, and close to where her mother was seated talking with Doctor Hallaway, who was standing. Her soft, white mull and lace graduating gown fell in simple folds following the outlines of her beautiful form. The flesh and cream tints of her perfect complexion radiated the purity of youth; while the expressive brown eyes, and wealth of golden hair framed in her wedding veil enhanced the alluring beauty of a personality composed of generosity, consideration and faithfulness. Even Carston Ronning admitted that the letters from his adopted son had failed to do justice to the superb loveliness of Glad Ray.

"Come, Lamb, I know your dear father and mother are eager for a look at their lovely daughter, but I am just as anxious for my little bride to look around at me for a moment, long enough for our own promises to be spoken," and the smiling groom received the loving attention he craved from his 'Lamb.'

During the short ceremony there was profound silence, broken only by the impressive voice of the minister and the earnest responses of the "Lamb" and her "MAN."

"We would have considerable trouble to sever the two marriages you and I have had performed, little wife." John Ronning clasped his bride to his heart, and kissed her full warm lips immediately after the ceremony.



"LITTLE BRIDE, LOOK AT ME"

"Nothing can divorce the union of two loyal souls whose marriage is founded on the rock of Immortal Love," asserted Glad Ray.

"That is right, my Lamb. *At last I am divinely happy.*"

"So am I, John, dear. In fact, we all have cause for unlimited joy and gratitude."

"Gratitude? Oh, yes," John suddenly recalled, "I think we'd all feel grateful now to participate in the combined graduation and double wedding festivities." Turning to Albert, he concluded: "You may now serve the dinner."

"Yes, sah,—yes, sah," and Albert hurried away to do the honors.

The bride beamed with happiness as she accepted John's arm and together they led the way to the spacious dining room where, at either end of the elegantly appointed table, there was a large wedding cake, and mounted on the top of each cake was a minature bride and groom. In the center of the table was a huge basket of wild cherry blossoms in a harmonious blending of palest bud to deepest bloom. Mounted on the handle was a diminutive doll-nurse holding in her right hand a small Scales of Justice, and in the left a tiny diploma. Those present, the nearest and dearest to her, fully appreciated what it all so thoughtfully stood for, and the great love of John Ronning for Glad Ray.

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